



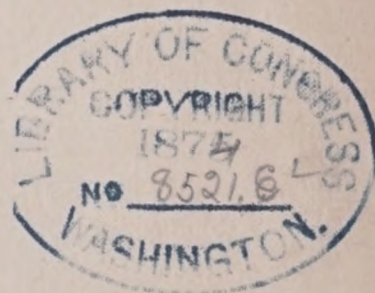


HIS PRISON BARS;

AND

THE WAY OF ESCAPE.

Approved
BY
A. A. HOPKINS.



RURAL HOME PUBLISHING CO.

ROCHESTER, N. Y.

HURD AND HOUGHTON,

NEW YORK.

[1875]

p23
H7746 H

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To
ONE WHOM A FEW OF US KNOW AS

GERALDINE,

This Volume

IS

TENDERLY INSCRIBED.

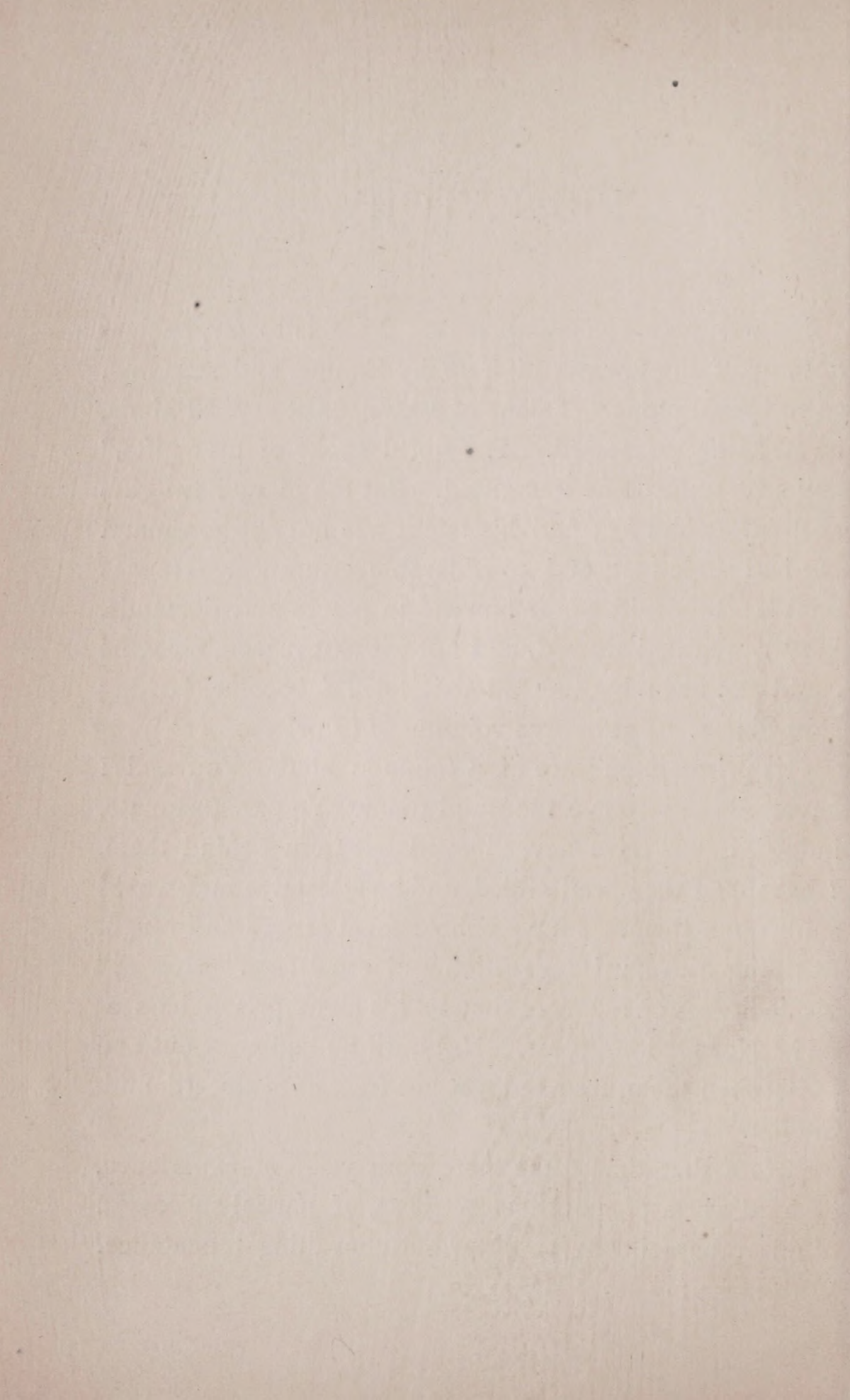


PREFATORY.

HE was just a common man. That is to say, he was not one of the few, set high up by Genius, and standing, so to speak, alone. Talent of a kind, or of several kinds, he certainly possessed. The world spoke of his "gifts," and so I suppose he was gifted. But the many have gifts as great as had he; and his talent was not extraordinary. He had some tact, and considerable assurance. He was pliable: he could adapt himself to places and demands. He was reputed shrewd, and not without reason, since he could not have become all that he did become, lacking shrewdness. Yet he was voluntarily in prison.

His prison bars were of a common kind. You and I have seen the same a thousand times. You are fortunate, indeed, if you have never looked out from behind them. I have seen them well gilded, and so attractive men would smile upon them. I have beheld them jagged and rough, frowning with hard suggestion and cruel fact. How did his look to him? Were they in his sight prison bars at all? Not for long years. Not until he had gone out and in between them, free and yet not free, until toward middle life.

Before that time came there were years of experience, of hard work, of ambitious purpose, of partial successes, of miserable failures, of bitter but unavailing repentance. With these my story has to do.



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HIS PRISON BARS;

AND

THE WAY OF ESCAPE.



CHAPTER I.

A BOY'S OUTLOOK.

"JOHNNIE! Johnnie!"

It was a woman's voice, calling up the stairway of an old-fashioned house.

"Johnnie! Johnnie!"

It rang out shrill and crisp in the morning air, and was enough, one would think, to wake either of the Seven Sleepers.

"*John-nie!*" said the voice, after a short pause, putting special emphasis on the first syllable.

"*John-nie!*" after another pause, the emphasis this time reversed.

All the echoes of the roomy chambers were aroused, but no satisfactory response came back.

"Johnnie Bremm!"

It was shorter and sharper now, and brought forth in answer a drawling—

"Y-e-s."

"Get up, Johnnie Bremm! Don't you wait another minute! Here I've been calling, and calling, and you as dumb as a door-post. An't you ashamed 'of yourself?"

Get up, I tell you! Your father'll be up there pretty quick, if you an't lively."

When the boy came down, he looked vexed and unwilling.

"An't you ashamed of yourself?" his mother again inquired. "Here 't is sunrise, and not a cow milked. Most likely the cows are all clear over beyond the hill, too, and you'll be another hour gettin' 'em. Why can't you get up in decent season, I'd like to know?"

The boy somewhat sullenly drew on his boots, which he took from under a lounge in one corner of the kitchen, and without saying a word went about his morning duty. As he left the room his father entered it.

"I've got that boy up at last," the mother said, complainingly. "He does try my patience so. What we shall do with him I don't see. He never wants to go to bed at night, and he never wants to get up in the morning. I called him just now until I was tired. I do wish you'd take him in hand."

"Oh, never mind, mother, he's growing now," was the reply. "Be easy with him!"

"Easy! you'd ruin the child with your easiness. What he wants is for some one to be hard with him a while. He's growing lazier and lazier, every day. He won't want to get up at all, pretty soon."

Then the father went out, and the mother, for lack of better auditory, talked to herself. "Easy! I wonder if anybody'd get up in this house before noon, if it was n't for me? John Bremm is the *easiest* man ever I knew. No wonder he says 'be easy' with that boy. He's a chip of the old block, that boy is—just a chip of the old block; willing to lie abed half the day, and let everything go to the dogs. We shouldn't have had a cent, if it had n't been for me. *Easy!*"

Words cannot express the contempt which this good woman threw into the dissyllable emphasized. No picture could quite depict the scorn in her manner, as she moved from the stove to the pantry, while commencing breakfast.

Out in the clear, frosty October morning went Johnnie Bremm. True enough, the cows were far away, behind the hill, as his mother had said. It was a long walk up the lane, and the boy was dispirited. His face had a hard look for a boy's to wear. Every one liked the face, generally speaking. It was frank, and fun-loving, and good-natured. Two black eyes laughed out from it, when the boy was pleased, with an irresistible influence. Just now, however, the good-nature was flown; the light in the eyes was not that of fun, or happiness; the boy's heart was turned to bitterness.

"Why can't mother be pleasant, I'd like to know?" he muttered. "This is just the way it is, all the while. Fret—fret; scold—scold. I never do anything to satisfy her. She makes me go to bed when I don't want to, and get up when I don't want to, and keeps dogging me every hour in the whole day. 'Bert Burley's mother an't so. What makes the difference, I wonder? Mother's as good a church-member as she is; and mother does lots o' good, they say; but she's so queer. Oh dear! I'm sick of it!"

Just then Carlo, the half-Newfoundland, came vaulting over the fence, his shaggy coat dripping from contact with the frost.

"Hello, Carl! Forgot you once, didn't I? Get down, you brute!" as the pet sprang upon him.

"I wish I was that dog," said the boy, a moment later, as Carlo went careering after a squirrel, along the corn-field they were passing. "It don't make so much difference to him, if any one speaks sharp to him. He is

driven about in the house just as I am ; but then, he's only a dog, and maybe he expects it."

Presently they had climbed the hill, and almost mechanically, as they reached the top, the boy turned to look back. Ever since he could remember, he had always stopped right here, and had looked to see just what he now saw.

Close by, it seemed, almost at his very feet, was the farm-house, dwindled down so small it reminded him of a moderate-sized hen-coop, with a chimney stuck on ; in front of it stretched the farm, or part of it, and other farms, their fences straggling off here and there, and coming together at intervals, as if uncertain of their course ; beyond, across the narrow valley, rose a hill range, twin to this upon which he stood ; and away to the left ran the two ranges, appearing to come closer and closer to each other, until one tall mountain peak, which loomed clean-cut against the sky, stood as their bond of union, though in truth it was miles from either, being quite detached from both.

Off to the left, not over two or three miles distant, was Liscomb, the county seat, proud of its pretty park, its half a dozen churches, its new jail, its shaded streets, its Female Seminary, and its two newspapers. A mimic river coursed the valley's length, far as the eye could reach, — a silver thread, tangled in among the fields yet green with a season's late freshness.

The year was in its glory, and this picture which Johnnie Bremm saw had rarer colors than any artist could mix. Close by, on either hand, the maples flashed out upon him splendidly ; here and there a sumac blazed up like a flame ; elm, oak, and beech rustled rich tints in the breeze ; and gorgeousness was everywhere so common it almost palled upon the view. All the valley was a-blush

with beauties, and every hill-side glowed with the warmth of autumn hues.

Some subtle grace of October lent its charm to the scene, and the boy stood for a moment as if entranced. A hundred times he had looked out upon the same brilliant landscape, and always it had been to him like a psalm. He had a keener sense of all things lovely than many youth possess, and in his sight this loveliness was supreme.

The grieved, unwilling look went away from his face.

"It pays to come, after all," he said. "I ought to have been here at sunrise. I will, next time.

"How much broader the world is, high up," he went on. "Down there at the house it's very narrow, and up here it's so broad. I'd rather be pretty high up all the while. I don't like being tied down in the kitchen or the cornfield day after day."

Then he glanced at the steeples of Liscomb, rising mutely heavenward.

"Wonder if father won't let me go to the village and learn a trade?" he went on. "It would be ever so much better than such a dog's life here. Who knows what I might make there? If I stay on here, I'll be another slow-coach of a farmer, I s'pose. I'm sick of milking cows, and hoeing corn, and digging potatoes. What's the use? Now if I could be a lawyer, or an editor, or some such, that would be worth while. An editor is what I'd like. An editor is up on the hill all the time, where the world is wide. Maybe I could get into 'The Telescope office—who knows? I'll see what father says, and I'll try."

And full of a new thought and a new determination he went on after the cows, light of heart again, and hopeful, as it is a boy's birthright to be.

CHAPTER II.

NATURAL FRUIT.

IT was a quietly busy day for father and son. When the chores were all done, and breakfast had been eaten, they went out into the cornfield, and there labored.

Husking is work for a poet. That is to say, if it can be indulged in out-of-doors, with an October glow over all that is round about, an autumnal richness flooding the atmosphere, a rare sense of bountifulness seeming to pervade all things. The rustle of dry husks has music in it. The yellow ears are like a promise fulfilled. The season's ripeness is full of suggestion, and pleasant sentiment, and an inaudible, unexpressed thanksgiving.

There is a whole summer of growth in the golden grain. It is easy to recall all that the days have been to you, as you handle ear after ear—all of growth that has come into your life. And so it comes about that husking is reflective work. The work itself requires no thought, but it suggests much. For the dreamer, perhaps, the thought is mostly reverie, but it is reverie very pleasant. For the matter-of-fact man thought takes on practical shape, and there are ultimate results.

Johnnie Bremm was not exactly "a dreamer born," and yet I think he had somewhat of the poet in his organization. He loved beauty in any form. He felt a subtle sense of sympathy with everything in Nature. He enjoyed natural manifestations, and had his moods, to cor-

respond with the weather. In the little community where they lived he was accounted bright and apt, but a trifle inclined to indolence. To tell the truth, he did sometimes shirk work, if the work was not to his liking.

And though husking may be work for a poet, it is tiresome for boys. Besides that, it makes the hands sore, and its monotony taxes the patience. Only one ear after another — how slow the progress is! Johnnie was a boy, and he tired of it. He was a boy beset with new aims and ambitions, and he grew restless easier than otherwise he would. So, timidly and awkwardly, he spoke of his desire to leave the farm — told how he wanted to go and get into other work and make a man of himself.

That evening, when he had gone up-stairs to bed, his father broached the matter to Mrs. Bremm. He did n't go at it direct, but felt his way along, as if a little doubtful of the end.

"Corn's turned out pretty fair to-day," said he. "If the whole piece does as well we'll have a couple o' hundred bushels to sell. It's goin' to bring a fair price, too."

"It's about time something brought a fair price," she answered.

"Well, yes, I s'pose it is. It don't pay, though, to find fault with the times. We've got to be satisfied, you know, whether we like 'em or not. They're the only times we can have, mebbe."

He laughed a little, as if it was a happy thought, — or perhaps he laughed as a man sometimes whistles, to keep up his courage.

"Johnnie was fourteen the other day, was n't he?" he asked, presently. "Or was n't it but thirteen?"

"Fourteen! Need n't think I'd forget that. And it don't seem more 'n ten."

"Fourteen! — well, I thought I was right. I was a-thinkin' about it to-day."

She looked at him curiously, to see what he might be coming at.

"We'll have to be thinking what we'll make of him, 'fore long, I calc'late."

"'T won't take a great deal o' thinking, to my mind," she said, promptly. "I don't want to see *my* boy anything better 'n *my father* was."

"Squire Garsley was a good farmer, true's you live, and I'd like to have Johnnie like him. But you see Johnnie an't like some boys."

"No, but he's a good deal like one man I know," she said. "He has n't got the right turn for a farmer. But he'll never make nothing else," she went on.

"That's what you always say, mother. Mebbe you're right. I dunno. Had n't we better let him try, though?"

"Try what?"

"Well, I'll tell you. He wants to go to Liscomb and learn a trade. He thinks mebbe he could make a man of himself."

"The Lord makes men."

"No, mother, I don't 'xactly agree with you. Men grow. The Lord never made more 'n one man. 'N' I've been wonderin' if Johnnie might n't grow into a bigger man if we let him have his way."

"There are enough big men already. Better make him honest. I want to see *my* boy grow to be an honest man."

"So do I, mother. I ruther think he'll be honest, anyhow; he comes o' honest stock. There wan't many men the equal o' Squire Garsley for honesty."

"If he learns a trade he'll never have nothing," she declared. "Always a-livin' from hand to mouth. I want to see *my* boy forehanded. What trade does he want to learn?"

"He's took a queer notion he'd like to be a printer. Wants to go in 'The Telescope' office, he says. Thinks he might get to be an editor."

"Dear me! dear me! Worse and worse! Who ever knew an editor to be worth his salt? What will the boy get into his head next, I'd like to know. I wonder if you think I'd let *my* boy be an editor? It may be all very genteel, but who cares for that? A good, honest farmer's good enough for me."

"Yes, I know. But you see boys an't all alike, and Johnnie don't take to farming, any way, as you say. Mebbe we hadn't better force him out o' his bent. I don't think I was cut out for farming, and I'm against spoilin' a good mechanic in makin' a poor farmer. Men grow, and other men help 'em. I take it fruit, with any of us, is mostly *natural* fruit. You can't graft a farmer on to a mechanic and gain anything. It's right agin nature."

"Humph!"

That was her only reply. Johnnie heard it, for he had been an interested listener to all the talk. He knew just how his mother looked, whenever she half breathed, half ejaculated, this one answer to any proposition she was downright opposed to, but against which she could not at the moment raise a valid argument.

And Johnnie crept off to bed in a humor somewhat like that of the morning, and far from confident that hopes which his father had rather encouraged would be in any way fulfilled.

CHAPTER III.

GOING WITH THE GRAIN.

NOT a word more was said about Johnnie's going away, for a whole month. The boy knew his mother too well to presume upon opening any discussion with her, and went around for the most part silent, and altogether dissatisfied. Mr. Bremm so thoroughly understood his wife that he wisely held his peace.

"You've got to go with the grain, with Honor," he reasoned. "She jest worships that boy, but she don't let it crop out much. She is kind o' set on some things, and it an't no use tryin' to turn 'er. We must let her take her time, and be kind o' easy with her."

When November came, Mr. and Mrs. Bremm went over to Liscomb to trade,—or he went to mill, and she to do the trading. Before he started homeward, he stopped in at "The Telescope" office.

"You don't want any boy to learn the trade, do you?" he questioned, awkwardly, of the editor.

The editor looked up from a paper he was clipping, and answered, as if amused,—

"No; just engaged one. Lives out near you, too," for this editor knew every one within a radius of ten miles or more.

"Does he? Some one o' the neighbors' boys, I s'pose. What's his name?"

"John Bremm."

"Oh! Mis' Bremm's been here, has she?" he said, at once catching the clew.

"Yes."

"Think likely you can make anything of the boy?"

"Can't say, I'm sure. It'll depend a good deal on the boy."

"Well, Johnnie's bright enough, and he means well. I hope he'll satisfy you. Good day."

And he went out, more pleased by his wife's procedure than he cared to show.

"Honor's *heart's* all right," he said to himself. "She sort o' goes by contraries. She don't mean half what she says. I'm powerful glad she's come around, for the boy really seems bent on this thing. Wonder when she'll let on about it?"

It was not until evening that she "let on." Johnnie had gone to bed.

"I suppose John'll have to have a new suit of clothes," she said.

"I don't know," he answered. "An't he dressed well enough, now?"

"Not to go off to live among other folks. If he's going to work in the village, he must have clothes he won't be ashamed of. I want *my* boy to look as tidy as other boys."

The way in which she always emphasized the possessive pronoun, when speaking of her boy, suggested sole and undivided ownership.

"I bought some cloth to-day, for him a whole suit," she went on. "Here it is—plain, but'll wear, and won't show dirt. It'll wash, too. I shall make it all up this week and next, and he can go by the middle of the month. They'll take him into 'The Telescope' office, then. I went to see. I 'xpect 't won't amount to anything, but he can learn for himself."

"Yes, he'll have a good chance to learn. It'll be as good as a school for him, mebbe."

"Without any school-master."

"Well, sometimes folks can learn without school-masters. Mebbe he will. He's quick. Who knows but he'll some day make us proud of him, mother?"

There was very little more said about the matter, between them, for several days. Mr. Bremm told Johnnie, next morning, that it was decided he should go, and the boy grew hourly into new consciousness. He was near to a turning-point in life. How much it meant to him, only those can appreciate who have stood right where he stood, and have looked out upon an unknown world which they would speedily enter. His days and nights were equally full of dreams. Ah! if all of boyhood's dreaming could but find its realization!

He was to come home often, to spend Sunday; and the going away had less of homesick dread in it than he would else have experienced. For no matter how earnest may be a boy's longing for broader opportunities, he does not stand upon the threshold of those opportunities without a desire to shrink back. At the last, home-love is strong. Youthful associations have a keen relish. It is harder to leave than he supposed.

In those last few days at home, every attractive spot was visited. Every pleasant morning or evening he climbed the hill, for its outlook. He loved places, as if they were of human kind, and it was harder to leave his favorite haunts than to bid his mother good-by.

Yet she was softened somewhat. Day after day she stitched away upon the boy's clothes, and all the time she was at work upon his life. His life, and her own. She lived over again those rare hours when as yet there was no sound of baby in the house, although the little

garments had begun to take shape. She recalled all the sweet expectancy of that season, when gray hairs had not hinted of age, and girlhood was not wholly a memory. She thought with tender regret of the two dead little ones they had put out of sight, before this third one came. And if at intervals the tears gathered in eyes quite unused to weeping, and if some sighs were breathed over hopes quite unfulfilled, I do not think it strange. She had been a merry, fun-loving girl, once. She was now a hard-worked, middle-aged woman, whose wine of life had largely turned sour.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW BOY.

"WILL the new boy come to-day, father?"

"Yes. He'll be here to dinner. You must try and make him feel at home."

Little Hope Hensell asked the question, and her father answered it. Her father owned and edited "*The Telescope*," which was the best patronized paper in Liscomb. He was a man of really fine ability, and his paper was made up with care and in good taste. His reading had been extensive, and his acquaintance with the best literature was intimate.

Hope was his only child. She divided his attention with "*The Telescope*." Young as she was, she shared his reading — of the more literary sort — and helped him out at odd times by "clipping" for him, from the numerous exchanges he nightly brought home. She had thus early developed the literary instinct, and her father began to wonder if some time she might not do fairly with her pen.

There was nothing remarkable about Hope's face, except the eyes. She was not an especially pretty child. Her features were rather irregular, though the general contour of her face was good. But the eyes — they were large and intensely brilliant, though their exact color few could determine. At times they seemed dark to black-

ness ; again they looked only deep blue ; and yet again they appeared a brownish gray. Their color, indeed, seemed to change with every new expression of feature, and to shed a new light over the face.

Johnnie Bremm's introduction to work of the types was as a strange revelation to him. Of course he accomplished little or nothing the first few days. The apprentice, — the "devil" of the office, — he could give but an odd half-hour, now and then, to learning a compositor's art. In his sight those dainty little bits of metal, which the type-setters picked up so deftly, and ranged rapidly in line, were nearly magical. The presses also, and even the dingy ink, were magically possessed. He stood quite in awe of the trade he had come to learn — in awe of the grimy-handed men at their cases, who had long known that trade — in awe, that was almost reverence, of the man who sat in a snuggerly apart from the main office, and wrought at his editorial desk. To Johnnie's unsophisticated belief, an editor was wisdom personified — the very embodiment of knowledge. He fairly trembled in the editorial presence. He entered into that presence as into a veritable holy of holies.

I mean at the outset. Gradually, as he came into familiarity with the business and its belongings, he grew to see that there was no magic in anything about him — that the men who toiled at the types, and the man who wielded pen and scissors, were very like other men, and just human. The mystical art of printing he found but a matter of skill, and painstaking, and taste, and common-sense. What patient effort had been required to make it so simple, he may not have imagined, as few indeed do imagine, but he was quick to divine the real secret of success in it — care and patience, well directed and unceasing.

At Mr. Hensell's house the boy had a shy reception from Hope, when first he appeared there, but they presently became well acquainted, and good friends. Both were inveterate readers, and both took kindly to whatever sort of reading was placed in their way.

It was not long before Mr. Hensell took note of Johnnie's bookish inclinations, and began to encourage and help him in many ways. The editor's library was large, and though very miscellaneous in character, it contained many volumes especially profitable and interesting to the young; and these, during the long winter evenings which ensued, Johnnie read. Often, to be sure, he spent hours upon some worthless piece of sensational fiction, for much of this kind of literature drifts into editorial possession; but Mr. Hensell's direction saved him from acquiring a taste for this alone. Then as he learned type-setting, he daily perused a variety of matter, instructive or humorous, which stood instead of a school, largely, and familiarized him with the great outside world.

The details of his apprenticeship I must pass lightly over. They might interest some readers, but my story has to do more especially with what lay beyond. Ready, willing, and good-humored, the typos liked him; faithful and promising, his employer was pleased. Liking his work more and more, very happy in his employer's home, his own satisfaction was uniform. Once or twice a month he went to the farm, and always with a certain gladness to go—always with the same gladness to return. Mrs. Bremm did not grow more sweet and kindly in her disposition. She met him at the door Saturday night with affectionate warmth; she took a real pride in his manifest improvement, month by month, and would deprive herself, if need be, to do for him. But at the slightest provocation she would fret at him as provokingly as ever, and thus all her well-doing was neutralized.

But for his father, the boy would hardly have cared to go home at all. Between father and son the sympathy was near and strong. The father's pride in his boy was continually growing. On long Sabbath afternoons of summer, they had a habit of going off on the hill, and looking at the world from the boy's old outlook. There they would talk of many things, and it was well for both. Mr. Bremm had a certain honest faith in good, a certain philosophical trust in the Supreme Goodness, that his son could not help feeling the influence of. It shone out in his very commonest speech. From the first he had thought of Johnnie as destined for a wider life than his own, and now much of his pleasure was in the thinking about it, and in seeing how surely the boy seemed growing toward the breadth hoped for.

CHAPTER V.

GETTING ON.

"JOHNNIE'S getting on, mother," said Mr. Bremm to his wife, one night. "The boy's getting on."

"Well, why should n't he?"

"No reason why he should n't, 's I know. He's quick, 'n' he likes to learn. He'll make somebody in the world, yet."

"I always intended *my* boy should."

Mr. Bremm thought of the talk they had before Johnnie went away, but wisely held his peace.

"He's begun to write," Mr. Bremm went on to say, after a little. "You remember that piece in the paper about 'Helpfulness'? It was signed 'Mell.' He wrote it."

"How do you know?"

"Told me so, this afternoon. Said he didn't let Mr. Hensell know whose it was, first. Hensell thought 't was pretty good, 'n' so he printed it. Would n't wonder if 't was the makin' of the boy. A little encouragin' helps an amazin' sight, sometimes."

"It won't do to encourage boys too much. They get too big for their clothes."

"Well, I dunno. Praisin' 'em may be bad, but encouragin' don't hurt anybody. We don't any of us have any too much encouragement in the world. Words don't cost nothin'. Let's be free with 'em, if they're good."

This was about two years after John's apprenticeship began. In a year more it would end. The third year passed quickly. Johnnie's ambition was fully roused, and he made every effort to progress. He tried his pen often, and at times with a considerable success. Of course his initial performances were crude, and had little in them of real originality. Of course, too, he looked upon them as somewhat wonderful, and never tired of reading and re-reading them after they were spelled out by the types.

The old story of authorship is ever new, to him who studies it through for himself. What one does has a sort of interest for him which is unaccountable. The very commonest of commonplace takes on fresh meaning. Platitudes are prosy no longer. The young writer goes over his work with a conscious self-satisfaction that is rather ludicrous, in later years, to look back upon. If anything he has written be refused publication, he feels less wounded than you might expect, for he generally charges the editor with a lack of appreciation, or bad taste, or undue favoritism. The idea that his production has no merit is seldom entertained. As he grows older, he loses this self-satisfied spirit, in proportion as he has true literary genius, and becomes more and more distrustful of self, and less and less confident. The vain conceit of his boyish endeavor passes away, and is remembered only to smile over. The purpose is more fixed, and the desire more steady. Then has come the season of profitable doing.

With the third and closing year of his apprenticeship, John entered upon the most dangerous period in a boy's life. He was approaching seventeen — young manhood. Indeed, in his own estimation he was already a young man, and could with propriety assume the rights and privileges of that mature age. Until this time he

had lived his quiet, student life at Mr. Hensell's, content to read the evenings away. Now he began to feel an uneasy, restless longing, which he could not understand, and which he did not try to overcome. The invitations from brother typos, to join them in occasional merry-making, had greater attraction. Now and then he accepted such, and found that joviality was very pleasant, and began to question if it were not better to have more recreation. By and by he was certain that for health's sake he must study and read less. Next, a set of lively, witty fellows drew him with them whithersoever they would.

It was months — months of only occasional yielding to outside social influences — before John Bremm went into any real dissipation. He shrank from the very appearance of evil. But a little yielding opens wide the door. After long holding aloof, the young man drew near, at last, to actual temptation.

It was the same temptation that every young man comes face to face with, sooner or later. It glistened out upon him from handsome decanters ; it sparkled into his face from the open cup. It smiled and lured him on. Some subtle grace it had, as it has for all.

Yet he resisted it awhile. As long as he could he held himself free. "What would father say?" was many times his mental query.

And while youth thus questions concerning parental comment, there will be little going astray. When forgetfulness comes, or still worse, a reckless independence, who shall say what the end may be?

This came to John Bremm. In his forgetfulness, or prompted by that reckless independence which has marred so many lives, he yielded. A little yielding, was it? True. He merely drank a glass or two of the wine.

He did not get drunk. Of course he knew there was no danger of that, when he took it. He was not a sot. He was not so foolish as to take more than he ought. So they reasoned who pressed it to his lips. So he reasoned himself.

He only drank a glass or two. But he felt strangely exhilarated. He grew wise and witty at a rapid rate. He flashed up in a way quite astonishing. "Never knew Bremm had so much in him," said one of the company. "Sharp as a file, an't he?"

He only drank a little. But next morning he was not so clear-headed as usual; his fingers were not so nimble; he felt ashamed, and vexed, and more uneasy than ever. "What would father say?" he asked once more — when it was too late.

Two hours afterward a solemn answer came, and the young man's life seemed touched upon as by a sad-faced angel from heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SOLEMN ANSWER.

"SOMETHING'S happened to your father. Had a fall, or something."

That was what the messenger said.

John heard him in a kind of fright. He did not speak or move.

"You must come with me, right away. There an't no time to lose. He may be dead now, for 's I know."

Blunt and cruel, the message. But it stirred the youth to action. In a moment he was ready to go.

They drove rapidly, but those three miles never seemed so long, before. A hundred questions were upon the boy's lips, but somehow he could not utter a word.

"How did it happen?" at last he asked, as they came in sight of the house.

"Can't say," was the reply. "Your mother, she just come to our house, and says she, 'Go for a doctor quick! John's a'most killed. 'N' bring Johnnie back with ye,' says she. Afore I could put any questions to her she was half-way back to the house. The doctor he came right off 's soon as I told him, 'n' then I got you."

They were at the gate, now. John sprang out, and ran quickly up the walk, a strange dread at his heart.

In the entry his mother met him.

"Oh, John!" she said, "he 's a'most killed! It 's awful!" And she wrung her hands and turned away abjectly.

"Go right in," she continued, as he hesitated, and was about to speak. "Go right in. He's in the bedroom, and the doctor's there. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

He obeyed, and she followed him. His father lay upon the bed, propped up by pillows and chairs. His eyes were open, but they seemed looking into vacancy. He was evidently in great pain, and but half conscious. John stopped, unable to speak, scarcely able to stand. He shook like an aspen.

"Has Johnnie come?" the injured man inquired, a spasm of pain making him writhe.

"Here he is," the doctor answered, giving way.

John took his father's hand, and bent down by the bedside, swallowing quick and hard.

"Let me see the boy alone," said Mr. Bremm, putting one arm about his neck with a tenderness that set him sobbing, despite his efforts at self-control.

Mrs. Bremm and the physician went out, and for a moment no sound was heard but John's stifled sobs.

"I'm pretty near done for," said his father, still looking into vacancy, and holding him in a convulsive clasp. "I fell off the high scaffold, and I'm hurt inside. I can't live."

"Does the doctor say so?" Johnnie asked between his sobs.

"No; but it's so, all the same. I'm goin', very soon. Promise me one thing, Johnnie: be good to your mother. She's nobody else to depend on now. She'll fret a good deal, mebbe, but be patient with her. She's had a sight to put up with, and mebbe she an't to blame. Be stiddy with her. She's done well by you.

"Honor's heart's all right," he went on, as if now speaking to himself. "She sort o' goes by contraries, but her heart's all right!"

"You hear me, Johnnie?" he asked a moment later.

"Yes, father."

"I wanted to see you a man, Johnnie; but it can't be. Try'n' be a better man than I've been. Try'n' do good. 'T an't easy to do right always; but do it."

He paused as if exhausted. A moment later he resumed.

"Johnnie"—speaking with difficulty—"I've never spoke to you—about your soul. You've got—a soul. Don't forget that. Don't forget—that. You've got—a soul. Don't let it be lost. Be good to your mother—and—your soul."

Johnnie could not speak. He was sobbing painfully.

"Let your mother come in now—and—don't forget—to be—good to her."

Johnnie rose and opened the door, and turned aside, as Mrs. Bremm and Dr. Kirke reëntered.

"There an't a great while longer, doctor. I'm goin' pretty soon. It's all right. God knows about it."

"I'll give you something to stop the pain, so you can sleep," said Dr. Kirke. "Maybe after that you'll feel better."

"No use—doctor—no use. I'm near through. I'd ruther go out—wide-awake. Mebbe it'll be pretty dark—to see the way; but I—must take—the chance."

The doctor gave him an opiate, nevertheless, and presently, while yet trying to talk, he dropped wholly out of consciousness.

"There can nothing more be done," said Dr. Kirke. "Watch him closely. He may sleep for hours. If he does not grow worse before to-morrow he may get well. I'll come again this evening." And with this he went away.

Wife and son hung about the bedside all the long

afternoon. There was nothing to do but watch. They rarely spoke a word. Mrs. Bremm was for once quieted, and had no complaint to make. By snatches she told how she came to find her husband, lying almost insensible in the barn; how she had one of the neighbors' boys help get him into the house; how she got a messenger started for medical assistance. Beyond this, there was nothing to tell.

At nightfall the injured man aroused, partly, and seemed about to speak. They stood by him, in silence. Was he better, or worse?

"Honor's heart's right," said he. "Be good to her, Johnnie — be good" —

Five minutes later the doctor came, but his patient was gone. In the old farm-house were only the widow and the fatherless, and these needed not his ministry. He went away, and in his stead came neighborly ones who ministered unto the dead.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

Two whole days John Bremm went in and out, out and in, at the old farm-house, as if in a dream. But for that still form, lying there in the spare room, he would have fancied himself waking from some horrible vision. When he went in, as now and then he did, and stood a moment by the dead, the vision became terribly real. He came, so, to comprehend, in a vague, uncertain way, some of the deep things of life.

He saw little of his mother all this time. The first shock over, she took up her daily habit of careful attention to everything. Two or three neighboring women prepared her mourning costume, and while they were engaged upon this she went up and down, restless as ever, the old mood of complaint strong within her. He ought to have known better than to go up on that rickety scaffold, she more than once declared, speaking of her husband. What was she to do, now, she'd like to know?

They let her talk—those who kindly stayed with her to assist. As for Johnnie, he went quietly out of hearing, often as she began; and thereupon she charged him with hardness of heart and ingratitude. Several times he walked up to his old outlook, and sat there thinking, thinking. The world seemed wider than ever, now his father was out of it. Who was there to love him? His mother? Oh, yes. Of course she loved him; but some-

how her love counted less than it should. Hope Hensell? Yes, again. Hope was his friend. She was like a sister. She would do more to fill the dead friend's place than any other could. Hope was honest, and true. Hope would give him real sympathy, when he went back.

Perhaps it was strange that now, as never before, his thought centered upon Hope. It does not seem so to me. Knowing, as I so well do know, how their lives had grown along together for years, it seems very natural that this great loss of his should render her life and sympathetic interest doubly dear. Take from any one of us a part of what we possess, and we cling yet more closely to what is left.

Those last few months John had been growing away from Hope. She had had no lot in his outside merry-makings. He had hardly spoken with her concerning them. He had felt himself surprisingly beyond the simple things of their hitherto quiet enjoyment.

Now he felt a strange drawing near to her, and fairly longed for the sad finale of those dreary days, when he might return.

When the funeral came, he sat beside his mother and shed no tears. He heard the minister read — at first as though he heard not. He listened to the minister's remarks — at first as though one were talking afar off.

"When a friend dies, it is not so much that one we love is dead, as that part of our life is wanting."

This was the first declaration, made there in that solemn gathering, which he really heard. It harmonized with the mood of his grief. Part of his life was wanting. Ah! what a want it was!

"We do not live our life alone," the preacher went on to say. "Even the most isolated take some hold upon

others. God made us to be just parts of the whole. No man can be the whole. He could not be if he would. He would not, if he could. And when a part close by to ourselves is touched rudely, or is quite removed, we feel the touch. In some way we do not clearly understand, the part has become ingrained with our own fibre. To take it away is to take away part of our very being."

It was plain that this preacher knew what such a loss actually was. Presently he said, —

"But if you lop off parts of a tree, the tree will live. It may even blossom, and bear fruit. Just so with us. The tree's sap may run freely, at the first, but by and by it will dry up, and heal over. So with us all. God has mercifully ordained that we shall not weep always. He dries up the fountains of our griefs. He bids us assume the functions that, as parts of a whole, we are called upon to perform, and we obey. In work and growth we may partly forget. The lopped life is one-sided and incomplete to its own consciousness; but after a time it grows more comely, and ceases to regret."

Would he ever cease to regret? He thought not. The preacher's philosophy here must be wrong.

There were some personal words at the close, which came home with force and directness, often as he had heard similar. They told of the warning which this sudden providence had for all, and especially for the son, about entering life. They made appeal to the son's love for the father, lying there cold and still, and to his desire for a future wherein the departed might also walk; and they abjured him, by all this love and desire, to turn and accept the same faith in which the departed lived and died.

"Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," said the preacher, at the grave. But he linked with the saying yet another

that somehow gave it a relief: "I am the resurrection and the life!"

And when he uttered this, John Bremm was nearer to becoming a Christian than ever again he was in long years.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO INFLUENCES.

I THINK Hope Hensell's companionship might have done much for John after this. He inclined more than ever to the good. He shrank from the evil. For weeks he shunned merry associates, and was content in the quiet atmosphere of the Hensells.

Finally it was settled that his mother should leave the farm, a good rental offering, and move into the village. John would thus have a home with her once more, and she would no longer be alone.

He was not enthusiastic in favor of the plan, it must be confessed. It was very pleasant at Mr. Hensell's. Mrs. Hensell was the very opposite of Mrs. Bremm, and the former's serene temper was in striking contrast to that of his mother. He had a sort of dread for any arrangement which should place him again regularly in range of her fretful tongue.

But his father's injunction was strong upon him. He would do his best to carry it out. He would do what seemed best for her, let what might come to himself.

So the plan was fulfilled, and in less than two months from Mr. Bremm's death, John was away from the Hensells', and again at home. Hardly that, though. The new place was new, and without associations. The only real home-likeness it had was in his mother's presence,—and this did not make it just the home he craved. He

loved his mother, in a proper, filial way; but she was constantly weakening the sympathy between them by her chronic fault-finding.

'Bert Burley, John's intimate in early boyhood, was in school now, at the academy, and Mrs. Bremm proposed that he board with them. She thought, and truly, that his daily intercourse with her boy might be of help to him. She also thought—for the managing faculty was still dominant within her—that their income would be sensibly increased by the arrangement.

It was well for John that his friend came. Albert Burley had the sober common-sense which is rather uncommon in youth of his age. Possibly it was due to his organization that he so steadily held his course, amid numerous temptations. It may be the common forms of sin held no temptation for him. I do not just know. I used to wonder, often, seeing him go out and in so regularly, whether he cared at all for the pleasures of those from whom he rather held aloof; whether he found it anything of a sacrifice to forego amusements that few did forego; whether he kept so closely at his studies, and worked so faithfully, solely because in this he realized perfect satisfaction.

In these later years, coming nearer to his inner life, as I have come, and seeing so much of his actual nature exposed, I have concluded that he always had capacity for the very fullest animal enjoyment; that he could at any time have reveled as thoroughly in amusements as any of us did; that he actually kept a restraint upon his desires, and was a little "Quakerish" in his carriage, as the boys called him, simply because he had better wisdom than boys of seventeen commonly possess.

The two roomed together, and for a time 'Bert's quiet influence held John steadily to the right path. Such an

atmosphere in the kitchen and sitting-room as was ever in their snug chamber might have kept him there altogether. But Mrs. Bremm seemed grown more than ever fretful, since her husband's death. John could n't help thinking that she was angry with the Lord for what had befallen her, and was perpetually venting her anger upon him. Naturally enough, he was not happy where she was. 'Bert necessarily gave so much time to study that his companionship was often of a more silent kind than John liked. Thus it was that he came to spend occasional evenings out, and that he drifted back, slowly, but surely, into the questionable amusements of the months gone by.

He did spend an evening, now and then, at his employer's, but these were somehow less satisfactory than they had formerly been. Hope seemed shy of him. He felt less free than in time past to talk with her. He was constantly drawn toward her by some strange attraction he could not comprehend, and as constantly repelled or drawn away.

And thus it went on until his apprenticeship was ended, and he was ready to take up work as master of his craft. Then something occurred which was utterly unlooked for, and gave a new direction to his life.

CHAPTER IX.

HON. ISRAEL BREMM.

THE Hon. Israel Bremm had been again elected to represent his district in the lower branch of the State Legislature. It was for his third term. He had twice served his constituency "with great faithfulness and entire devotion to duty" — or so it was declared by the resolutions passed in nominating convention. Of course he "had not sought further honor at the people's hands, being quite satisfied with the measure already generously bestowed" — or so he declared in the speech accepting nomination, which speech he had been cogitating for a fortnight previous, and which was spoken of by an unsophisticated public as "a most masterly off-hand effort, fully sustaining the honorable gentleman's reputation for clearness of political insight, for fealty to principles, and regard for the public weal."

The Hon. Israel Bremm was brother to John Bremm deceased, and uncle to John Bremm living. He was a lawyer in the flourishing town of Ossoli, and a rising man. Since early youth he had seen little of John's family. His life had been quite absorbed in the struggle for a profession, and in the after struggle to make his way in that profession. His visits to the only near relative he knew had been very rare. Almost without the thinking of it, his course had separated far from the humdrum path John always followed. John was easy, and lacked

ambition. Israel, from very boyhood, had been determined to succeed in life. This had been his one dream and purpose. To succeed he denied himself recreation, cheated himself of domestic enjoyments, willingly gave up brotherly ties. He had great native force ; he was quick to acquire, and ready to assimilate ; he possessed an intuitive knowledge of men. His tact was naturally fine, and he cultivated it assiduously. His address was that of a gentleman, and suavity came as easily to him as did breathing. He was not disposed to put too fine a point upon matters of conscience, and if he had keen sensibilities, as I think he had, he seldom let these stand between him and any result. In short, Israel Bremm was by nature and education a politician. Having drifted into the political arena as naturally as the duck takes to water, he was as sure to remain in it as to live.

When John Bremm died, Israel was off in another State, busy with an important law case, and news of the bereavement did not reach him until some days after. Then he wrote a letter of regrets and sympathy to the widow, and tendered substantial aid, if this were necessary. Mrs. Bremm had never replied. Partly because she believed Israel Bremm "stuck up," and partly because she knew his coldness for many years had sorely grieved her husband, and she was now inclined to resent any past ill-treatment of the dead, however little she heeded it in his life-time. "We got along well enough without Israel Bremm's help when your father was living," she said to John, "and we can get along now, and no thanks to him. If he did n't think enough of us to remember our existence more 'n once in five years, we don't think enough o' him to take any favors. Israel Bremm may go his way, and we'll go our 'n."

By a caucus of his party the Hon. Israel Bremm had

been made candidate for Speaker of the House, and his election was certain. He would have public places at his disposal, and he began to cast about in his mind for proper persons to put in them. There were applicants in plenty, of course. For every position in his gift a score stood ready, with their applications strongly indorsed. The great difficulty lay in making selections without seriously offending many. He must in no wise sacrifice popularity. His constituency must be satisfied just as far as possible. All his tact and suavity were called into exercise.

He finally adjusted matters as he believed would be best for Israel Bremm's benefit and the public good—you will observe which he put first—concerning all the places but one. For this, two of the numerous applicants were about evenly balanced, as to indorsement, and the choice could not be made between them without certain offense to all friends of the party not chosen. What was to be done?"

Some good fortune just then suggested to the politician that he had a nephew, and tact caught at the suggestion. Straightway the politician wrote to John Bremm, tendering him the place, and volunteering, if the young man would accept, to make a man of him.

It was this letter, and the tender it contained, which so changed the course of John Bremm's life. He received it at one of the times when Mrs. Bremm's fretfulness had waxed bitterest, and when to be with her was a sore torment. He was restless and uneasy, moreover, having reached that point at which a youth feels a diversity of ambitions and desires moving in his breast. Four years at the case had made the printer's craft monotonous to him. He had sickened, too, of some of his associations, and was really anxious to get away from them.

Then the place which might be his without the asking would afford opportunities for wide study of men, and it might lead to better things. Its pay was quite as good as he could possibly earn otherwheres, and its duties would not be difficult.

Having read the letter carefully through many times, he promptly wrote a reply, saying he would accept, mailed it, and began to feel a new consciousness of importance in the world. He knew his mother would object, and would strenuously oppose the project; but the matter was decided, and there could not be a change. His mother did object, and wondered what he supposed she was going to do, left there all alone; but he assured her Burley would be there with her, and that he would visit home often, and see that she got along well.

And then he prepared for departure.

CHAPTER X.

A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS.

HOPE HENSELL was in the very bloom of young womanhood. In these four years since she welcomed "the new boy," she had grown wonderfully in breadth of nature and capabilities, and now promised to fulfill, and more, all her father's expectations. Of late she had been in the seminary, and altogether engaged in study and writing. Nearly every issue of "The Telescope" contained something from her pen. For one so young, she had rare excellence of literary style, and her little essays and bits of verse showed more originality of thought than is common with youthful writers. She had also a certain sprightliness of language which pleased people, and which made her essays readable.

Hope liked John Bremm. In all their intercourse they had harmonized well together. That she had been in any wise less frank and sisterly than formerly, in recent treatment of him, she scarcely realized, and could not have explained. She had liked him from the first; she liked him yet. More than this she never admitted to herself.

Yet when Mr. Hensell told her of John's plan to go away, she felt a quick pain in her heart, and went off quietly by herself, to think.

That evening John came, to say good-by. Next day he was to leave.

They talked it all over, he and Hope,—the plan and

the possibilities, — with quiet Mrs. Hensell an interested listener.

“It’s the best thing I can do, seems to me,” John said. “I have a good trade, and I’m glad of it; but I want to be more than a type-sticker, and this offer of Uncle Israel’s opens the way, I think.”

“It is very kind of your uncle, is n’t it?” Hope remarked.

“Yes; and I’m very much obliged. He means to do me a good turn, I am sure. A hundred young men would be glad of the chance he gives me. There is n’t anything that would suit me better, for a while. It will be such a good opportunity to learn the ways of the world.”

Hope looked a little troubled. She wanted to put in a little sisterly admonition just here, but hesitated. The mother spoke.

“There’s the only objection I see, John. You are going to be in very different surroundings from those you have been accustomed to. You may learn some ways it were better not to learn. Have you thought about it?”

“Oh, yes,” with an indifference of tone he tried to hide. “But I’m not afraid. Some things have to be learned, I suppose. There is n’t very much more danger in one place than in another. Plenty of openings for a fellow to go wrong, wherever he is.”

“True,” Mrs. Hensell said. “But the right kind of influences about one may keep him from going wrong, however numerous the opportunities. I am rather inclined to question the influences you will be thrown among at Baylan. You will have no home there, remember.”

For the moment Mrs. Hensell forgot that John no longer had a home with them.

“That will not be such a loss, perhaps,” the young man answered lightly, but with a touch of bitterness that

would not be quite repressed. "When John Howard Payne wrote about 'Home, Sweet Home!' he was n't there, you know. He might have sung another song, if he had been."

"Don't talk that way, John. There are homes and homes, I know, and all homes are not equally pleasant. But a home — any home — is one thing, and a boarding-place is another. I boarded for several years in a large city, before my marriage, and understand the difference better than you can. Here, we tried to make it home for you. It may not be so, elsewhere."

"I know," he said. "This is the only real home I've had, late years. But this is not mine, now, and never may be again. I must do the best I can." And he laid his head on his hand, and sat silent.

Hope's large eyes had a look of wistfulness in them, when John arose to go, which he had never seen before.

"You will write often?" she said, with sudden warmth.

"Yes, if you will care to hear."

Care! As with a lightning flash it dawned upon her then that to hear from him would thenceforward be the one thought of her life. The revelation had come, which comes sooner or later to all hearts. She blushed with a new consciousness, and could not speak.

Mrs. Hensell saw, and with her motherly tact replied:

"We shall want to hear, of course. You must write as often as you can, and Hope will answer for us all. Tell us about everything that interests you.

"And we shall look anxiously for the first letter," she added as he reached the door. "Good-by!"

She shook his hand and kissed him, in motherly fashion. Hope merely gave him a hand-clasp, but it was warm with the new feeling which thrilled her, and the clinging touch seemed to hold him long after he had reached his room.

CHAPTER XI.

GLIMPSES OF BAYLAN.

BAYLAN is a city of ups and downs. You may not find it on the map, and yet it is there, and conspicuous. Indeed, it has been conspicuous, on the map and in reality, since those clever Dutchmen began it, back in another century. It began with many-gabled houses, very stylish in the real Dutch style, and it has not even yet wholly outgrown these. Here and there you may still see one, looking very small and quaint, and reminding you, somehow, of a bright little old woman preserved a long way past her natural life. In the main, though, it has got far beyond the old Knickerbocker simplicity, and wears an air of modern smartness, such as the capital of a great State is entitled to wear.

How the good old Dutchmen would stare, if only they could live in this new Baylan, which they never dreamed of. Their ways were honest and simple; alas, for the ways of to-day! There are rings, and cliques, and wire-pullings, and office-seeking, and none but an old politician knows what. Four months in the year Baylan is overrun with the strangest mixture of honesty and dishonesty, sharpness and innocence, good intentions and bad, that ever flooded a community. Baylan never discriminates. It is one great mill, and whatever comes to it is grist. Legislation blesses it, no matter how the legislation may curse other localities. Upon legislation it feeds. It is

very lucky for Baylan that whereas one hundred and sixty men are supposed to make all the State's laws, it takes an average of four times that number to do the work. Great is the power of appointment, and greater still is the Lobby. The one man who votes, and thus helps declare whether or no a bill shall become a law, is but a small point in the great legislative machine.

This is only a glimpse of Baylan, which I give you, and a glimpse from within. John Bremm's glimpse, as he reached there toward dusk of a late December day, was by no means the same; but his was a glimpse from without. To him Baylan was a great promise. Here men came to win honor and fame. Here the State centered. Here he was to step forward in life. Here he should see the intellect of the Commonwealth gathered. Here he should come in contact with the wise and influential.

At the depot, what a Babel! Had they gone mad, he wondered? Would they rend him in pieces? The hackmen beset him in solid phalanx. Twenty seemed to have lived for no other purpose all their lives than now and here to make assault upon him. They hedged him in. They blocked his way. They shouted in his ears, and put their whips under his nose, and held his arms. They tugged at his valise and called for his check, and inquired where he wanted to go. They waxed more and more eager, until in sheer desperation he parted company with his valise, and then shot off in the wake of the fellow who carried it.

"Take me to Legislation Hall," he said as the hack door closed upon him.

They drove along a crooked street some distance—which street he found afterward was called Broad, because of its narrowness—and then, turning a corner, climbed the long hill to the Capitol grounds. It was but

a little glimpse he got, as they proceeded, but that impressed him. The houses were massive and old-fashioned. The sidewalks were wide, and lined with wide-spreading trees. The street itself was of unusual width, and therefore inviting.

A slight turn to the right disclosed the Capitol, looking out at him from its shadows with a hundred eyes of light. (The State never complains of its gas bills.) It was a plain old edifice—he saw that—but yet it did look inviting. Every window was aglow, and the whole wore an appearance of brilliancy which quite dazzled him.

Legislation Hall was just above, and here he found himself, presently, in the midst of a crowd of excited men, each clamoring for a room. With a feeling of manliness new to him, he took his turn at the hotel counter, and wrote his name.

“Can’t give you a room yet, young man,” said the clerk, who recognized the youth as a nobody. The Hon. Mr. Jones registered next, and the clerk was more obsequious to him; but John had stepped out of line, and did not see it.

He went away from the crowd a little, and looked about him. The men whom he saw in groups around were very like other men. Surely these were not the men who represented a great people. Well, many of them were not. They were legislators by brevet. They made the men who made the laws, and then they had the laws made to suit their own desires.

When he was tired of looking on, he remembered that to find his uncle was his first duty, and as by this time the clerk was at liberty, he approached and inquired,—

“Is the Hon. Israel Bremm stopping here?”

“He is,” said his highness the clerk, a little more politely than he would have answered an inquiry for an unknown Peter Smith.

"I would like to see him."

"Let's see; your name is"—

"Bremm," said John, "there," pointing to the register.

"Oh, yes, I remember. Some relative of the Speaker, are you?" the clerk asked.

"Yes."

"Then you can see him right away, I think. He's in his room now. I'll send up and find out."

Two minutes later John was shown to his uncle's apartments.

"And this is brother John's boy, is it?" said the Hon. Israel Bremm, in greeting. "Glad to see you. Glad to see you. Glad you decided so promptly. John always was slow about making up his mind. It didn't so much matter to him, perhaps; but to me time is everything, and I must act on the word. It's the only way to get ahead.

"Come, sit down," he continued. "I expect some party friends in to see me directly,—several have only just gone,—and then I shall be busy.

"Ready to drop into your place at once, I suppose? No need to wait. Better get you a boarding-place, though, first thing. Plenty of them, near by. Look around in the morning; the papers will tell you where. Don't pay too much. They charge fearfully, here in Baylan. It's downright robbery the way they bleed me here at the Legislation, but I have to stand it. A man in my position must be prepared to receive his friends, you know."

John looked at the centre-table, on which were a server and several empty glasses. His uncle saw the look.

"That's one of the penalties I must pay," he said.

"It won't do to be mean. My friends expect me to treat them well, and I must. I seldom take any liquor myself, but a social glass now and then don't hurt me. You never touch it at all, of course. Your father never did, either. You can't do better than to follow in his footsteps in this respect, so long as you are not forced into taking something by custom. I'm not an advocate of teetotalism; but that's the best policy, when you can't do more than tickle your palate by drinking. A man is a fool to drink liquor simply to feel well, or gratify his appetite. If he must drink a little to satisfy society, or keep up his popularity, that's another thing."

John did not reply. In his heart he was pained. He did not believe the reasoning. Already his uncle had lost footing in his regard. He was not used to such open recognition of social demands. He had argued thus with himself, many times, and been partly satisfied; but to hear another boldly declare the same rather shocked him.

"You will like your berth," his uncle went on to say, after a little. "There's not much work about it. Most of the time you can be in the House, and if you keep your eyes and ears open you can learn very much that will be of use. Have you ever written any for print?"

John answered that he had.

"Then you had better be appointed as correspondent to some paper, and that will insure you many privileges. I will add your name to the reporters' list to-morrow. Come in in the morning and we will talk further. My visitors are at the door, and will want to see me alone."

John took the hint, and his leave.

CHAPTER XII.

UPS AND DOWNS.

I HAVE said that Baylan is a city of ups and downs. Next day, John made himself familiar with the fact. He spent an hour at breakfast with his uncle, and then started out to find a boarding-house, taking a dozen advertisements in his pocket. Of boarding-houses there was no lack, but of rooms suitable to his means there seemed few. Province Street — the wide avenue running up and down the hill in front of the Capitol — was most inviting, but a few trials here convinced him that the locality was too aristocratic for his purse. The boarding-houses, he learned, were mainly patronized by members with families; members whose salary of three dollars a day, enabled them to pay thirty or forty dollars a week for the Hon. Mr. and Mrs. Member's board and lodging, and have something left over with which to buy books for the Hon. Mr. Member's constituents.

After much of going up and down, he found what appeared to be suitable quarters, in a private boarding-house on Gull Street, not far from the Capitol. It struck him as rather odd that almost every street hereabouts bore the name of some bird, and he had some misgivings as to the name of this particular street, but these he paid no heed to.

Two days later he wrote his first letter to the Hensells, and here it is: —

ASSEMBLY CHAMBER, *January 6, 18—.*

DEAR FRIEND HOPE, — Here I am, where so many distinguished men have been before me! I write at my "reporter's seat," from which I expect to indite a letter to "The Telescope" in a few days, when I shall have learned enough of men and things here to enable me to make up a fit letter for print.

I rather like Baylan — this part of it. The Capitol stands on a hill, and is delightfully situated. The Assembly Chamber is the finest room in it, and here I am to spend nearly all my time. I feel sure, already, that I am going to learn more this one winter than I could possibly learn in Liscomb for a whole year.

I board at Number 123 Gull Street. I was "a stranger and they took me in." What do you think of paying eight dollars a week for board and a little sky-parlor seven by nine? It don't take one long to find out that Baylan people propose to make all they can out of the Legislature. Two or three members stop here, and a railroad man, and a few clerks, and at the dinner-table there's plenty of talk. Members put on a good deal of dignity when they first come to Baylan, and as two of those here are new, we are sufficiently dignified. These new members are both young men, and like to recognize each other's official position. "Will the gentleman from Bessemer pass the bread?" says one; and "Will the gentleman from Sleebs hand me the milk?" says his friend.

There is a wag at table, in the shape of a railroad clerk, who caused a general roar of laughter to-day. The two members had been pretty free with their official recognitions, and by and by, when it was quite still, this young fellow turned to the colored waiter and gravely said, —

"Will the gentleman from Africa please give me some beef?"

I suppose it was a very impudent thing to do, but I laughed over it until I choked. The two members laughed too, and we all laughed.

"That is very good," said the gentleman from Sleebs.

"Yes," said the old member from Lawton; "it is almost as good as ever it was. It is the stock joke here in Baylan. I heard it during my first term. But it is good, nevertheless. And one can't be expected to make new jokes all the while, can he, Mr. Clint?"

This may have been a little sarcastic on the old member's part, for Mr. Clint colored up a little, and made no more jokes, old or new.

Yesterday Uncle Israel took me in to see his Excellency the Governor. The Executive Chamber is a very nice room, very handsomely carpeted, with costly furniture in it. The Governor sat at a table in the middle of the room. He and Uncle Israel seem to be very good friends, for he was very polite and made me like him right away. He asked me several questions, which I managed somehow to answer, and then he and Uncle Israel withdrew to a smaller room, and were there some time together. When they came back we came away.

"I shall want to see more of you, Mr. Bremm," the Governor said to me. You would like him, Hope, I am sure.

If I were a small boy still, I should enjoy Baylan for its coasting privileges, although the small boy with his sled is almost a nuisance to children of a larger growth. There is so much up-and-down-hill here that coasting on the streets is very common. They even coast on the sidewalks, and keep these so very slippery you can scarcely walk upon them. If I were a surgeon, in need of business, I'd settle in Baylan, sure.

But I am making out a long, stupid letter, and must bring it to a close. Please answer soon. With kind regards to all, I am,

Your Friend,

JOHN BREMM.

CHAPTER XIII.

POLITICAL ASSOCIATION.

JOHN'S first letters for print were not of much account. They told of men and things in a gossipy way rather pleasing, and added interest to "The Telescope," which now boasted of having correspondence from the capital, and quite overshadowed its rival in consequence. Of the mysteries of Baylan, as old legislators and lobbyists know them, he yet knew nothing, and therefore could tell nothing.

It is somewhat astonishing, how people like to read gossip. The average of clever people, I mean; those not alarmingly profound, neither astonishingly critical. Take the newspaper correspondents, and select him who talks least of thoughtful themes, but runs on most about men and women of mark, and you have the one whose letters please most, and are widest read.

John had not learned this yet, but he wrote gossipy letters because there was really nothing but gossip he could write. He gossiped of the Capitol, and what was in it; of the other public buildings, near by, and their uses; of the State officials, the Legislature, and the hangers-on. Though his style ran much to adjectives, he gave promise of very clever work in this line, and Mr. Hensell complimented and encouraged him. So, too, did Speaker Bremm.

"The boy has more in him than I thought he had,"

said that gentleman, after reading a letter in which there was considerable spice of personality. "He may be made to serve a good purpose by and by, when he knows the ropes better, and has become discreet. I must give him some points."

The Speaker did give him some points, presently, and found him teachable. He caught suggestions readily, and worked them out well. He was quick to observe and speedy to develop.

I do not wonder that the young man grew to like the new work in the new world. There was constantly an excitement about it. He was daily brought in contact with varied kinds of men, and learning something from each. He was daily undergoing a process of sharpening—sharpening of intellect, sharpening of wits. It is not surprising that soon he came to look back upon his quiet season at the case as a sort of probationary period, and began to dream of a wider outreach henceforth. Such associations stir ambitious purpose, and provoke discontent with the past.

If John could have mingled only with those most moral and correct in habit, it would have been well with him. He thought it very well with him as it was. As weeks went by he became familiar with many about him—many with whom intimate acquaintance was a profit; a few whose intimacy could but work harm. He was the Speaker's *protégé*; and that put him forward. He was bright and keen, and of a nature to be liked. He was a close student in the politician's art, for one so young, and was fast learning tact and worldly discretion. New plans for the future were vaguely shaping into form, and he had sense to realize that success in some far-away purpose is only assured by successful endeavor in the work now under one's hand. What little labor he did for the State,

he did well, since he was looking for commendation ; what he did outside of that he did up to the measure of his culture and capacity, because he enjoyed the doing.

It is not an essential to political success that a man shall be strictly honest, strictly temperate, strictly moral : I state a very harsh fact in as mild language as I can find. It is notorious that men are elected to office whose honesty few will indorse, whose intemperance is known to all, whose immoralities are a shame and disgrace. How is it that they come to be elected ? I am not writing a secret history of politics, or I would tell you. Indeed, so much of secret political history has been of late made public, that you could almost answer the question yourselves. They *are* elected, these men of easy political and moral virtue ; and you shall see some of them in any State Legislature, go there when you will. They are "good fellows," as the term goes, social, large-hearted, popular ; men enjoy their companionship, and but mildly condemn their faults.

John Bremm came to know some of these. There were no more such at Baylan then, I suppose, than there are now, neither were they any worse. They did not sacrifice themselves upon the altar of legislative hard work. They loafed and smoked in committee rooms, mornings and afternoons ; they lounged in the Assembly Chamber, through hours of session ; they went to the theatre, or played cards in their own apartments, or went to nameless places for nameless purposes still worse, evening after evening. Now this is not the ideal business of a representative ; but it never happens that of a hundred and odd men all are following out the ideal. A few, at least, are sadly, shockingly practical. They preach service to others, and practice service to self. So it was with these. They would give the needful modicum of drudgery in the

interests of their constituency, but beyond that they seldom went. Having paid well for the privilege of coming to Baylan, they were willing to make of their stay there in some good degree a recreative season, a play-spell, "a lark."

If a knowledge of some of these things shocked John, at first, he grew less sensitive very soon. It was so easy to breathe in the atmosphere around him, so hard to resist the genial influences all about. Sometimes he wondered what his father would have said at hearing of things he but too frequently heard of; but the wonder was not so much a wonder of pain that the things existed, as a wonder of pity for the good parent's innocent ignorance of the ways of the world. How much he was learning that his father never knew of!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE JOLLY MEMBER.

It was weeks before John overstepped the limit of his resolve, and tasted wine. Custom demanded it, then. His Excellency the Governor held a reception, and John was among the many invited guests. Of course he donned his best clothes and attended, feeling very small, insignificant, and out of place amid so much glare and glitter and style, until the Governor came and talked two minutes to him as courteously as to a senator. Then the mercury of his enjoyment and self-satisfaction rose to blood heat, and when one of the jolly members came and said, "Bremm, let's go and eat something," he went at once.

What a revelation that supper-table was to him !

"Fine spread the Governor sets out," said the jolly member. "Beats anything I've seen this winter. His Excellency does honor to our stomachs, and that suits me to a T."

"Who says tea here?" flippantly inquired young Ashe, standing near. "Can't you name a better fluid?" Ashe was chief clerk in one of the State Departments, and knew the difference in liquids.

"Can't a man talk the alphabet to you without setting you to thinking of something to drink?" was the response.

"Well, I've been having an awful dry time," said Ashe.

"Been talking to Senator Groom's daughter for a half-hour. Could n't get rid of her, you know. Turned her over to Marsh's tender mercies at last, and came out here to get something before it was all drank up."

A servant came along as he said this.

"Can you get me some champagne, Peter?" Ashe inquired.

They were standing at one end of the large dining-room, and while the servant went for glasses they talked on.

"The Governor knows good wine, does he?" asked the jolly member, "the gentleman from Sychar."

"He does that. His eats are good, but his drinks beat 'em hollow."

"Then I should think a man would have to eat again, after drinking," said John. "Would n't have a fellow go away hollow, would you?"

"Eat as many times as you choose to," said the jolly member. "'Let us eat, drink, and be merry,' says the Scripture. Have some oysters, Bremm?"

Peter came back with the champagne, and offered a glass to each. Bremm had said "No" to invitations elsewhere tendered him; he wanted to say it now; wanted to, and did not want to. He hesitated.

"He who hesitates is lost," said Ashe, in a declamatory tone. "Take it, Bremm."

"Yes, try the Governor's champagne. Follow the advice of Timothy, and take a little wine for the stomach's ache," said the jolly member.

"That's a painful way of putting it, Mr. Limm," John said, taking the glass.

"The best way to put it is to put it down," said Ashe, and he suited the action to the word. So, too, did the others.

"That'll do," said the gentleman from Sychar. "Very fair liquid. Try some more, Bremm; these glasses don't hold a thimbleful—not a great while, that is."

They ate and drank and made merry, between themselves, for a half-hour. John was witty when the wine had warmed him a little, and could crack his joke with either, and relished it. The jolly member grew more jolly with each glass of the liquor, and Ashe might have been boisterous if it had been anywhere else than in the Executive Mansion.

Having eaten to their satisfaction, and drunken all that Ashe and Limm dared to,—more than John desired,—the three took leave.

Out on the street they talked of the people and made merrier than before.

"Come to my room, boys," said the jolly member. "It's early yet. We'll have a smoke, and a night-cap."

John held back.

"Oh come along, Bremm! You don't want to be in bed for an hour, anyhow. A smoke will do you good, after eating. Just got a box of fine cigars to-day. Want you to try 'em."

He went, and for two hours they had the bad atmosphere of smoke and impure stories,—stories impure as the air they breathed. When at last John broke away, and sought his quarters on Gull Street, his brain was foggy and his sensibilities dulled. All he sensed was that he had been a guest of the Governor's, had had a jolly time, and was in a hurry to find his bed. If he stumbled a little while climbing to his attic room, it was owing to the lateness of the hour and the darkness of the way, and not to anything taken inwardly. So, at least, he would have argued.

Next day he rose late, and it was lucky he wanted no

breakfast, since the breakfast hour had long passed. His head ached and his hand trembled. Thinking over his evening's enjoyment, he was inclined to question "if it paid." The gentleman from Sychar met him on the floor of the House and exchanged greetings.

"That champagne of the Governor's must have been a little mixed," said he. "Gave me a bad feeling right here," pointing to his forehead. "How's your head?"

"A little mixed, too, I think," John answered, and passed on to his reporter's seat to write a gossipy letter about his Excellency's party.

But he found writing impossible. The words ran together, and there seemed no sense in it at all. After an hour of wasted effort he postponed the duty, and went away.

CHAPTER XV.

GERALDINE FAYTHE.

I SHOULD like to follow John Bremm's life, in every-day detail, through that first winter in Baylan, but to do this would lengthen my story unduly. Nor would it much interest the general reader. I, knowing Baylan like a book, or — to use a comparison more in keeping — like a newspaper, take a sort of pleasure in reading anything which relates to the place and its people ; but to the great public Baylan is just — Baylan ; the capital ; a political centre, from which political influences radiate ; a market-place for manhood, where they buy and sell and get gain.

And to write of John's every-day life in the full would be but to describe, with more or less minuteness, the daily habits and customs of law-makers, — since John was regularly associated with these, — lit up at intervals with an outside experience. For John could hardly go through four months of being and doing, even when mainly narrowed down to legislative work, without forming general acquaintances ; and it was a good fortune, I shall always believe, that he did form some of these. He was thus taken out, for a little, of the whirlpool of scheming ambitions, and breathed at times a purer atmosphere.

I would not have you think that because John Bremm once overstepped his resolution, and practiced intemperance, he thereafter was uniformly intemperate. It cost him an effort to forswear intoxicants so much as he did,

but he mainly did forswear them. At receptions he took his glass of wine with the rest, but when invited to drink by every-day associates under every-day circumstances he commonly refused. His excuses were varied. He never said squarely, "I am afraid to indulge much ; my will is too weak ;" though this would have been simple truth. On the contrary he argued, as nearly all young men argue, "I can drink, or I can let it alone." And as yet it did not require a very strong will to "let it alone." Self was still the master. If self should one day become the slave, what then? He saw no such possibility. Do men ever see it?

Among John's outside acquaintances were the Latimers. His acquaintance with them came through Geraldine Faythe, but how he came to know Geraldine I never learned. He always said she reminded him of Hope ; and that was really all he would say about her, in those days. I had known her some time — known her to be one of God's best and noblest ; and yet I never dreamed what rare nobleness was hidden 'neath her rather gay manner. She was a woman to win men, and she did win them. She was more than beautiful. Indeed I have wondered, hearing friends go into enthusiastic praises of her beauty, if she were beautiful at all, strictly so, I mean. Perhaps I was better able to judge than others. She was only my friend. I could look at her dispassionately. But the most of men saw her through the glamour of love.

She was a contradiction. Some people called her a flirt ; but they were young men who knew her only slightly, or had been unsuccessful in their wooing and were disposed to be cynical, or young ladies who envied her popularity and did not care to be generous. She had a certain lightness of manner that might easily be taken for

coquettishness. She liked to please — not to excite admiration, but just for the mere giving of pleasure. She was not selfish, and when people sought her companionship she gave it at its best.

And the real secret of her fascination lay in the fact that she never studied to fascinate. Coquettishness is an art, and succeeds, I know, in proportion as it appears artless ; but there can be, there sometimes is, attractiveness perfectly natural which equals the highest art, and this was Geraldine Faythe's gift. She did not abuse it. If some suffered on account thereof, the fault was not in her intention, but in her low estimate of self. That she had any special power of winning hearts did not seem known to her.

She was older than John, yet so young in heart and feeling that she never thought of it, nor did he. He had fallen into a man's place in the world, and he acted a man's part. She rarely gave, or seemed to give, a thought to the fact that as yet he was but a well-grown boy, and must ripen up in character and life. Perhaps he was older for his years than are some ; it may have been, it must have been, that he matured, in some considerable measure, earlier than the average of youth.

The Latimers lived over on Murray Hill, and were a genial, hospitable family, not given to display, but thoroughly pleasant. Miss Faythe was intimate with the Latimer girls. There were two of them — as there were two of the boys — Abner and Hull. Hull was the older, and several years John's senior, but between him and John the intimacy was close.

Hull Latimer, save in the Latimers' own circle, was a recluse. For society he cared nothing. With wit and conversational talent enough to shine in any gathering, he rarely accepted social invitations, and was known to

the many only as a quiet, retired young man of pronounced literary tastes. He had accumulated a fine library, and amid the companionship of his books was content.

It was this bond of bookish inclination which drew Hull and John together. John had natural literary taste perhaps equal to his friend's, but not so cultured. His reading had been more desultory than Hull's, and he realized it. He liked Hull's society, because in it he seemed somehow brought into nearer contact with literary genius and accomplishments than ever he had been before.

And, too, he liked the atmosphere in the Latimer home. His was a nature keenly social, and here sociability abounded. The house was full of young, hearty life. Even Hull's quiet studiousness sparkled out here into jest and repartee. There was never any lack of laughter and song. A clever set of young people made this place their central point, and here planned and plotted for the common pleasure. They took John into their *coterie* without questioning, because he was a friend of the Latimers, and the association helped him, as I have said.

John wrote often to Hope of his new friends — that is, of the Latimers, in particular, and the little social circle in general, which revolved around them. Of Geraldine Faythe he made rare mention. He could not have told why. Was it some instinct which forbade? Did he realize, as by an intuition, that this girl was to be more to him than any other, and did all that he and Hope had been seem somehow changed? I do not know. He met Miss Faythe frequently. To occasional gatherings which the Latimer *coterie* had, he was oftenest her escort. He spent an occasional evening with her, at her own home. He did not realize it, but she strengthened his good reso-

lutions, and gave him a better sense of life. Through all her merry sociality there flowed, for such as claimed friendly regard, an earnestness beautiful as sincere.

John was her friend. Was it likely, to her thinking, he could ever be anything more?

CHAPTER XVI.

AN EVENING AT STONE'S.

WINTER held on late that season, as indeed it often does in Baylan. When the last of March came there was still good sleighing, and the Latimer "set" voted to close their season's pleasuring with a ride out to "Stone's," and a supper there. "Stone's" is an hour's drive from Baylan, and was then, as perhaps it is yet, a favorite resort for pleasure parties. It is an unpretending public-house, but in those days held high repute for the excellence of its suppers.

The party numbered hardly twenty. They were to go in a large sleigh together, and rendezvoused at the Latimers' about dark. John escorted Miss Faythe, who was in one of her most bewitching moods, and as gleeful over the occasion's promise of enjoyment as a child. All, indeed, were in high spirits. The night was beautiful — clear and cold as any of the year — and the sleighing perfect. Every member of the little circle was on hand, and there seemed no drawback to a capital time. Even the hermit-like Hull Latimer had been persuaded to go, and before starting he and John kept all the rest in laughter with their sparkles of wit.

They were off, at last, good-natured old Mr. Latimer good-humoredly scolding them for attempting a pleasure ride with the mercury at zero, and declaring that they could get as much enjoyment, at less expense, by opening

all the doors and sitting in the hall with their feet in a tub of cold water. They were off, at last, well wrapped and snugly seated, careless of the cold.

Will any of the number ever forget that night? The air was motionless. A full moon, shining down upon the fields of snow, made it almost as light as day. The "four-in-hand" — their pick from Helm's whole livery — were as full of life as the party whom they drew. They fairly flew along the old turnpike road.

"Nothing in the classics quite equal to this, is there, Hull?" inquired Sturdevant, Belle Latimer's escort.

"I call this classic," said Hull. "It's as cold as any classic beauty I ever read of."

"For shame, Hull!" Belle declared. "What do you know about classic beauties — or any other? You never lived in Greece."

"No; but I've been to the oil regions," he answered.

"Why didn't you stay there, if it was so classic?" John queried.

"I should, if I'd been content to 'let *well* enough alone,' " was his reply.

"What an outrageous joke!" said 'Gus Latimer. "Hull, your wit needs warming. You'll set me all of a shiver if you perpetrate any more cold-blooded remarks."

"Can any one murder language to-night, and not do it in cold blood?" John asked. "I begin to feel like saying frigid things myself."

And so they ran on. Anything passed for wit. There really were some bright flashes of repartee, but warmed-over witticisms are always a little stale.

Before any one realized it, the hour's lively ride was over, and with a smart crack of his whip the driver reined up at "Stone's." It was yet early evening, and they had plenty of time for merry-making. Supper was not served

until eleven o'clock, and until then the little company forgot that there was an outside world — forgot that there could be sorrow and pain anywhere in it; they lived only in the present, and were content.

Hull Latimer's passion, next to books, was music, and he really sang well. To-night he was importuned to sing repeatedly, and as often complied. It was a question which he rendered best, the pathetic or the humorous, or which his listeners liked most to hear. There was one sober bit of sentiment, I remember, that he always gave with rare effect. It was new then — not the sort of ballad to be sung by everybody, and whistled by every boy on the street, but such an one as would charm the ear of taste and move the soul of sympathy. Simple, sad, tender, Hull sang it not alone with his voice, but with his heart. Geraldine Faythe asked for it now.

"Give us 'Marion Moore,' Hull," she said. It was her favorite.

As he sang she stood leaning against the instrument, looking neither at him nor at any one else, but apparently forgetful of all about, her beautiful eyes suffused with tender light. He seldom put as much feeling into the song as he did now, although never lacking in expressiveness. One could easily have fancied him breathing out an experience.

"Dear wert thou, Marion, Marion Moore!

Dear as the soul o'er thy memory sobbing;

Dear as the heart o'er thy memory throbbing;

Sorrow my life of its roses is robbing,

Wasted is all the bright beauty of yore!"

The little company knew how to listen. How still they were as he sang on!

"Gone art thou, Marion, Marion Moore!

Gone like the breeze o'er the billow that bloweth;

Gone like the rill to the ocean that floweth;

Gone as the day from the gray mountain goeth,
Darkness behind thee, but glory before !”

Through the stillness Geraldine could hear her heart beat. She saw nothing but a valley in the twilight, a mountain range shutting it in, the gray peaks tipped with color — darkness, here ; beyond, the glory of heaven !

“ I will remember thee, Marion Moore !
I will remember, alas ! to regret thee ;
I will remember when others forget thee ;
Deep in my breast will the hour that I met thee
Linger and burn till life’s fever is o’er !”

Could one put so much tenderness into tone for effect’s sake ? The singer was rapt in his song. Geraldine Faythe’s eyes filled with tears. Over the last stanza Hull lingered, breathing it out softly, lovingly, as though it were indeed a benediction.

“ Peace to thee, Marion, Marion Moore !
Peace which the queens of the earth cannot borrow ;
Peace from a kingdom that crowned thee with sorrow ;
Oh to be happy with thee, on the morrow,
Who would not flee from this desolate shore !”

There was silence for a moment as the last note died away. Who should break the spell ?

“ Hull Latimer ! If you don’t stop you will make me cry,” broke out impulsive Kate Belden, finally. “ And that ’ll spoil my complexion, and I ’ll never forgive you !”

The spell was broken, and very rudely, too. Geraldine was glad that just then the call to supper came.

“ Thanks, Hull,” said she, as he passed by her. “ It was beautiful !” And he knew the words meant all they could.

When supper was over, they resumed their merry-making, and continued it until a late hour. In fact, time flew so swiftly by that all were surprised when Abner Latimer called out, —

"Two o'clock, fellows! Home's the word."

Presently he came in from the bar-room, where he had been to settle the bill and order their sleigh, and said, —

"Fourteen degrees below zero, girls! Coldest night we've had since New Year's. Wrap up good."

Outside, the air cut like a knife.

"Lucky there's no wind," said one. "If it were blustering we'd perish."

"Who's afraid of cold?" inquired another. "Give your horses the road, driver, and let 'em fly."

The driver took him at his word. Helm's best team never made better time than now. They were naturally mettlesome, now the bitter cold made them doubly so.

The party said little, as they dashed along. Buried deep in robes and mufflers, they scarcely looked out. It was a splendid night, but no longer a night for laughter and song.

By and by a painful suspicion flitted across Abner Latimer's mind. They were going at a furious rate. From the moment of leaving "Stone's" they had only slackened pace once. Now they were flying on faster than ever. Either the driver was drunk, or —

He unwound his long muffler and looked ahead. The driver sat bolt upright, swaying neither to the right nor to the left, but firmly braced, and drawing powerfully on the reins.

It was clear to Abner, now. The horses were running away!

Luckily he sat next the driver's seat, and that was wide enough for two. He quietly put aside the robe, and threw himself up beside the driver.

"Can you keep them in the road?" he asked, speaking low, so the others should not hear.

"Yes, for a mile yet. Them blamed leaders have

taken the bits between their teeth, and there an't no stopping 'em. We're all right till we git to the turn, better 'n a mile ahead. If they keep it up till then " —

There was no need to say more. The young man knew very well what must follow. The road bent abruptly to the right, at the point alluded to, and off at the left was a steep precipice, dropping straight down thirty or forty feet. He thought of this and shuddered. They were nearing it fast! In two minutes more they would reach it — and then?

CHAPTER XVII.

A WILD RIDE.

HAVE you ever known two minutes seem an age? To Abner Latimer they were like an eternity of torment. They were going on to swift destruction, and what could he do? If he shouted out their danger, what would it avail? To leave the sleigh now would be madness: they must almost as surely meet death in this way as by plunging off the precipice ahead. Then there was a hope that still the infuriated team would tire of their race before reaching the turn, and thus all serious danger be avoided.

The others had not yet taken alarm, and that was fortunate. They sat wrapped in their furs and mufflers, unconscious of the horror now so near. The driver flinched not, but held on as for life.

Faster and faster they flew. Had the wind suddenly risen? So cold and keen was the air that it stung deep into the flesh. Abner's face felt burned and sore. A little more, and it would be frozen to the bone. He thought of this, as they flew; he even thought of wrapping up carefully again; so do these little things of small moment force themselves upon the mind amid great peril.

But he must see, and what mattered a chilling, with probable death so close at hand? Grimly and anxiously he waited.

One minute had passed. Half the distance was gone

over. Sixty seconds more, and what of them all, then? Abner could see where the zigzag rail fence on his right turned short off, and went zigzagging away at a right angle. It was only a little distance ahead now — only a little! And the mad horses never slackened pace at all!

“Pretty reckless driving, I call it!” said John to Miss Faythe, as they bounded over a rough place. And he too loosed his wrappings, and looked ahead. Seeing Abner by the driver’s side he wondered for an instant what it meant, but felt reassured.

On, on they went! It was a wild, wild ride. Yet only Abner Latimer and the driver realized its wildness and desperation, until all was over.

On and on! Not eighty rods away was the fatal turn. Already Abner could see the whole party hurled off the precipice, — men and women, and horses and sleigh, an awful, sickening mass. To sit grim and quiet, making no endeavor, was not longer possible.

“Are your reins stout ones?” he asked.

“Never’d ’a’ held till now if they had n’t been,” was the driver’s reply.

“Then give me a hold with you, and we’ll saw the brutes down!”

He seized one set, and bracing himself with all his might he pulled. The driver did likewise. Neither spoke, but with set lips and determined face each put forth his power to the utmost.

Did the horses slacken pace a bit? Was the endeavor quite hopeless? So it seemed at first. But grown desperate, and with every muscle at a tension, these two men did not yield.

The maddened brutes did. The hard bits cut their mouths, and chafed them. Harder and harder the two strong men pulled, not steadily, but with quick, sharp jerks

that began to be effectual. Their speed lessened, and Abner had hope. Only ten rods ahead was the turn, but they were saved!

Perhaps.

"Turn 'em into the fence!" said the driver, not so hopeful as yet, and as he said it, he caught the reins with Abner, dropping his own loose, and together they pulled upon the "near" leader and wheel-horse.

In an instant they were floundering in the untrodden snow, and a general scream told that all the party had been roused to a consciousness of trouble. Another instant and the sleigh was overturned, and amid a chorus of screams and cries one cry rang out with such pain and agony in it that it chilled the hearts of all.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LOOK IN AT LISCOMB.

AT Liscomb the winter wore slowly away. It was not unlike other winters, save, perhaps, to a few. Mrs. Bremm found it lonely, despite the fact that Albert Burley remained with her, and did what well he could to make up for John's absence. Of course she missed her boy; of course she believed, and would not give over believing, that in going away he thought nothing of her comfort, and did her a great wrong. Of course she recited her tribulations to every willing ear, and magnified them many fold. Complaint had become chronic with her; she really found a certain happiness in thinking and talking about her unhappy lot.

John did not go home as often as he had promised that he would. The journey took considerable time; not so much because of distance, as for lack of close traveling connection; and it cost some money. But neither of these considerations, as a matter of fact, operated most strongly in John's mind.

To begin with — there was his mother. Glad as she was to see him, when he did return, she could not long refrain from her usual manner of speech. There were little every-day trials — who does not have them? — and in her sight they were mammoth troubles, which could not be overlooked. She was alone in the world, and had only him to look to for companionship and counsel and bur-

then-bearing ; he was off enjoying himself while she slaved there ; he need n't think that sort of life could last always. Thus she reasoned, unreasoningly ; and his day or two at home failed not to be vexatious and unsatisfying.

To end with — there was Hope. Once he would have met her, no matter how often, with real pleasure. It would have been a pleasure undisguised. In the same manner she would have met him. Now there was a change. If he could have told in what the change consisted, he might have met it carelessly, or boldly. Any analysis of their relations was yet, however, beyond him. He only realized, in the vaguest possible way, that between them something strange had come ; that while he thought of her often, with a sort of longing tenderness, he shrank from the old intimate personal relationship ; that while he could write her free, brotherly letters, he could not talk with her face to face as freely and pleasantly as in days gone by.

As for Hope herself, she lived in a new land. She had come, as sooner or later every girl or woman does come, into her Paradise. In it she studied, and wrote, and dreamed. You who are middle-aged, whose happiness is personified in half-grown forms about you, that name you, as none others can, “mother,” — you will know what life for this girl was. You have not forgotten — no woman ever can forget — the days of a delight sweeter than words can express, such a delight as can only be remembered, and can never fitly be described.

When John spent an occasional day at home — and far enough apart these occasional days were — she went to and fro in a fever of unrest. When he came for the brief hour he gave the Hensells at such times, she greeted him eagerly, hesitatingly, checking her gladness ere it made a hearty welcome, rather puzzling him, and making more defined the line of division between them.

Meanwhile young Burley had formed a pleasant habit of dropping into the Hensell home, of an evening. He admired Hope for her scholarship and her talent ; he liked her for the quiet sensibleness she manifested. And she was sufficiently exuberant of nature to tone up his own rather grave studiousness, and exhilarate him.

Burley liked John ; how could he help it ? They had grown up from earliest boyhood together. The one was retiring, had little confidence, was ever doubtful of himself ; the other had grown out of reserve into boldness, was confident and hopeful. They were, in a way, two opposites, with a mutual attraction. Their correspondence was intimate, and their friendship close.

Perhaps Hope enjoyed Burley's society more because he was John's friend, than for any other reason. He was rather too quiet and reserved, she sometimes thought. He was not like John, overflowing with hilarity and sportiveness. He had not John's brilliancy. A good student he was, to be sure, but he won repute as a scholar mainly through plodding. He rarely sparkled, but he did often warm to a genial glow. He had not much talent, but he did have ambition and application, and in the long run these win.

One night Burley went down to Mr. Hensell's to return a book Hope had loaned him, and though "Cicero" claimed attention at his room, he tarried for a little chat.

"I had a letter from John last week," said he, as he picked up the latest "Telescope," and chanced on that journal's last letter from the capital.

"He thinks the Legislature will adjourn inside of three weeks ; and I hope it may."

"We shall all be glad to have him back ;" this with an effort to speak unconcernedly, that he did not observe.

"It's been a profitable winter for him, I think," he went on. "He has improved greatly in writing, don't you think so? He can do better than set type, after this. John has a knack with his pen that I rather envy. Some of his letters to me are very comical. I ought to have had another last night, but none came. His mother expected one three days ago, but failed to get it, and is quite worried. Ah! here she is now."

Mrs. Bremm entered as he spoke, not pausing to rap or ring. She was evidently excited, and out of breath. Hope started up with a sudden dread.

"Why, Mrs. Bremm! you look all tired out. Has anything frightened you?"

"No,—yes; I don't know," the woman responded. "I've just got word from John, an' I come over to see what your folks thought. I knew something was the matter. When yesterday come and no letter, I said to myself, 'John's sick or something,' and I expected it, and I an't disappointed at all. His Uncle Israel sent the word," and she held out a letter bearing the Legislative postmark, and having on its corner the stamp of the Lower House.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE END OF A RIDE.

It was fortunate that the snow was deep, and the horses quite exhausted with their already long run. Otherwise they must surely have got beyond any control, and dashed off with the overturned sleigh, leaving its recent occupants in a plight pitiable indeed. As it was, their condition was bad enough. They were covered with snow, and were sorely chilled. The ladies were frightened and nervous, and altogether apprehensive.

All the little party, save Abner Latimer, flung so suddenly from tolerable comfort into a situation most uncomfortable, were fairly appalled.

Abner, cooler and more self-possessed than the other gentlemen, either because he had not been wholly surprised, or because naturally so, turned his attention to helping the driver and securing the plunging team.

"Right up the sleigh there, some of you fellows!" he called out as he sprang for the leaders' heads. "Hull! you help the girls, and somebody help me here!"

"Who's hurt?" he asked, an instant later, between his attempts to pacify the rearing beasts. He had heard the cry of pain, and feared the worst.

Miss Faythe answered, as Hull Latimer assisted her to a standing position from the reclining one where she had been thrown, —

"It's Mr. Bremm. He caught me as we were going

over, and I fell upon him. He's almost killed, I'm afraid. Can't you help him up?" and she spoke with a tender appeal in her voice which even Abner Latimer remarked, amid his still vigorous endeavors, and remembered.

Two or three sprang to the prostrate form.

"Where are you hurt, Bremm?" asked Hull Latimer, putting an arm around the youth, to steady him, as they lifted him erect.

For answer there was only a painful moan.

"He's fainted," said one; "rub some snow in his face."

Hull was about to do as suggested, when John spoke, faintly, so only Hull heard:—

"No — don't. It's my leg — broke, I guess."

The rest had crowded around, partly forgetful of their own discomfort in sympathy for the greater sufferer.

"Can you ride?" asked Abner, who had left the team to their driver and another.

"I'll try," was the faint response.

They lifted the sleigh back into the beaten track, hastily replaced the articles so unceremoniously thrown out, and prepared to resume a ride no longer one of pleasure, but of misgiving and regret.

Abner and Hull tenderly lifted John into his seat, every motion torturing him with pain till he moaned incessantly.

"Is n't there some house near where we could take him?" inquired Miss Faythe. "He never can stand it to ride home to-night. The pain will kill him."

"There is n't a house of any kind within half a mile," said Abner, "and if there was, we should have to go to the city for a surgeon, and he'd suffer more with the waiting than he will with the ride. Don't you think so, Bremm?"

"Yes. It's easier now. I can stand it, somehow. Don't worry about me ; I'll get along," and he shut his teeth close and hard, and let them wrap him carefully, only flinching a little when they touched his injured limb.

Miss Faythe sat by him, on one side, as before : she had taken her seat as if unthinking.

"If you feel faint, lean your head on my shoulder," she said, when they had started.

Miss Faythe had nothing of the prude about her.

Hull Latimer sat on John's right, and still partially held him erect. In the moment's excitement he had forgotten how bitterly cold was the night, and how carefully they had all guarded against chilling, only just before. Abner's face was badly frosted, but he had given it no thought since the overturn.

There was little said, as they rode on at a pace not much less rapid than that of a few moments previous.

"You went faster 'n I wanted you to, you brutes, a while ago," the driver declared ; "now you shall go faster 'n *you* want to !" and he lashed them sharply.

"No danger of another run-away," said Abner to his nearest neighbor. "These horses have had enough of that for once."

But fast as they went, it was the longest ride John Bremm ever had known. In after years he knew one longer still, but it was under far different circumstances.

Miss Faythe tried to talk, but it was hard work. She suffered almost as much as did John, so keenly sympathetic was she. The others were silent for a time. By and by Hull spoke :

"Keep up courage, Bremm ! We're almost home."

Then, for the first, it flashed upon John that he had no home to go to, and again he grew faint and weak. He

surely could not be carried up to his little room and left there. He must have care and comforts which a Gull Street boarding-house did not afford. There was the City Hospital, on Condor Street, near Gull; should he go there? He was trying to think it out, growing weaker and fainter the while, when Abner Latimer solved the question for him.

"Go straight to our house, the nearest way," he said to the driver; "you can take the rest home from there."

John did not interpose. Indeed, by this time he was almost past sensibility. It was such a long, long way!

"Almost there now!" said Miss Faythe, at last. Her voice trembled, despite the effort to speak cheeringly; was it only with the cold?

"Sturdevant! you jump out and ring up Dr. Vanderweyde as we pass, and bring him after us as quick as you can."

Sturdevant did as Abner directed, glad to assist.

They reached the Latimers' home, finally. Just before reaching there, however, John's head dropped over on Miss Faythe's shoulder, and she said to Hull, —

"He has fainted. We must get him out as soon as possible."

They carried him in at once — the two Latimer boys — a dead weight in their arms. Miss Faythe followed with the girls. She had expected to spend the night with them, and remembered, and was glad, that her people would not feel anxious. Others were about to follow, also, but Gus Latimer stopped them, in her frank, off-hand manner which all liked.

"No, don't come now. Let the sleigh take you all home. We can take care of Mr. Bremm, and you had better take care of yourselves."

They acquiesced, and taking seats again were driven rapidly off, as Gus called after them shrilly, —

"Come around in the morning, any of you!"

Sturdevant came running up, half out of breath.

"It's morning now, and I am here!" he panted. "And I'm going to stay, unless you imperatively order me off."

"No; come in. You may be needed. Hull is no better than a baby, where any one is hurt. Did you find the doctor?"

"Yes; he'll be here in two minutes. He was up, fortunately, — just returned from a patient as I rang."

They had taken John to Abner's room, and Miss Faythe was bathing his head with camphor when the others entered. His wrappings were partially removed, and he was pale to very whiteness. As yet he had not spoken. A moment later he opened his eyes, and smiled languidly into the young lady's face.

"Are you suffering much, now?" she asked, her fingers lingering upon his forehead with a half-caress that none but the recipient noticed.

"Not much," faintly. "But I am so weak."

Dr. Vanderweyde came in, Baylan's most skillful surgeon, though yet a young man — a man with woman's tenderness, despite his trade. He was an old friend of Speaker Bremm, and knew the youth.

"What! is it you, John? I'd no idea who needed my help. Is it a fracture?"

He passed his hand professionally over the patient, stopping quickly as he saw the sudden pain a touch of his leg gave.

"Only a broken limb," said he cheerfully. "Ladies, will you leave us alone a few minutes?"

Half an hour later he entered the parlor where they nervously waited.

"It's all right now. You can go back if you choose.

But my advice is that you go to bed and rest. I have given John an opiate, and he's asleep already. Abner will watch with him until relieved. You look worn, all of you—go to bed!”

“You'll have to give *us* an opiate to make us sleep,” said Gus nervously.

And he did.

CHAPTER XX.

GETTING WELL.

WHEN John awoke next morning, Hull Latimer sat near by, talking with one of his sisters and Miss Faythe, who stood by the bed, looking down upon him commiseratingly. For an instant he was puzzled to know what it all meant. How came he here? What were these doing, about him?

The mystery cleared soon. One of his limbs felt stiff and queer. He tried to move it, and a twinge of pain warned him to desist. Then like a flash came perfect recollection. They had had an evening's amusement; it had ended seriously; he was injured and an invalid.

His eyes filled with tears, as full realization came. He tried to speak, but choked, and was silent.

"Our ride ended badly," said Miss Faythe, feeling that some expression must be made. "The enjoyment belonged to all of us, but you have to suffer all the pain. You must let us do what we can for you till you get well."

"I shall be a great trouble," he answered. "I can't stir, I suppose, for several days."

"Not for several weeks," interrupted Hull; "but don't think about the trouble. That is nothing at all. You must be as contented as you can."

"We'll try and not let you get lonely," said Gus Latimer, assuming a lightness of manner she did not feel, for

this was the first serious accident she had ever been intimately knowing to. "We'll be so good company you won't want to get well!"

He smiled a little at this. Rather sadly, however.

"But who will do my work?" And as he asked this he thought of Israel Bremm, and wondered what that gentleman would say.

"Oh, Hull can write your letters for print, and the rest will be got along with in some way," responded Miss Faythe.

So they endeavored to cheer him up, and make the rather unpleasant prospect look as bright as possible.

After he had taken a little breakfast, he thought again of his friends outside, and Hull volunteered to inform Speaker Bremm of what had occurred.

As soon as the afternoon session was over Mr. Bremm came. It was a bad situation, he allowed, but what could n't be cured must be endured.

"I'll have to appoint some one else to take your place until the session ends," he said. "You won't get around again this two months. When you do, we'll see what can be done for you. But what about your mother? She'll have to know."

"Yes. I'm too weak, now, to write. Can you find time to pen a few words?"

"I'm driven every minute, but of course I will do that much. Shall I say that you need her here?"

"No; I'm very well cared for, and need nothing but patience."

Is it not sad indeed when a sick boy, away from home, shrinks from even the thought of his mother's coming?

Speaker Bremm was driven incessantly, the session being so near its end; and though he returned to the Capitol with intent to write his sister-in-law at once, the

letter was not written till next day. Then, through some oversight, it was not mailed promptly ; some unusual hindrance *en route* delayed it yet longer ; and this was why Mrs. Bremm had become anxious and excited.

It was a very brief letter, and a very unsatisfactory one. When she read it through, she felt the necessity of conferring with some one immediately, and so she went to Mr. Hensell's, as we have seen.

"Israel might have told more than that, I should think," she declared, when Hope had read the few lines.

She did not see that the young girl was trembling with excitement, even as was she ; and fortunately her remark attracted Burley's attention so that he did not observe it.

"'John has met with an accident, and is laid up with a broken limb !' That's all he says, except that he has good care, and I need n't be anxious. As if any mother would n't be anxious, with her boy off so, as John is ! How can I help it ?" and the good woman began to weep, hysterically.

"Really, Mrs. Bremm, I don't see much occasion for anxiety," Burley said soothingly. "John is among friends, the letter tells us, and is well cared for. People rarely die of broken bones. He'll be home again in proper shape pretty soon."

"But what is the care of friends, when the boy wants his mother, I'd like to know ? I shall go to Baylan tomorrow. Mebbe he is in some dreadful hospital or other, and his uncle did n't want to say so. I'm going right home now and get ready to start !" and she pulled her shawl nervously around her, and turned away.

CHAPTER XXI.

A COMPLAINING WOMAN.

MRS. BREMM did not go to Baylan. When she returned home, with purpose to go, she began vigorous preparations for departure, and kept them up until late in the night. Thinking her boy might lack food for a dainty appetite, she made all sorts of tempting cookery, thus busying herself until the wee sma' hours. So late did she labor, in fact, and so unconsciously exhausted was she on settling to sleep at last, that next morning she slept far beyond her usual time of waking, and long before she could dress for the journey, the stage had gone.

There was no one to complain to but Burley, and she made his breakfast very uncomfortable. Why did n't he wake her in season? she asked. He knew she meant to go. If he had cared as much for John's welfare as he should care, he would want the boy properly seen to. And so on. To all of which the young man answered as he might, or answered nothing.

Growing more calm, presently, Mrs. Bremm bethought her of many things as yet undone, and reasoning that one day could not make much difference, she began to feel glad of the delay. So hour after hour she busied herself with further preparation.

Albert Burley had said, as they sat at breakfast, "I believe I'd give up going, yet, Mrs. Bremm;" and she had responded warmly, "I shan't take any such advice as

that. He's all I've got left, and do you suppose I'd leave him there to suffer?"

As she worked, and thought of her boy, she went, step by step, back into the past. Again he was a little fellow, playing at her feet, nestling on her knees. His cunning arms were wound about her neck; his velvet cheek touched hers. Hers was not velvet any longer—she came back to the present enough to think of this; there were wrinkles upon it, and it had grown hard under cares and falling tears. And now—back in the present still—her little boy was lost. Could full-grown John be the same little toddler she held so often and so tenderly to her heart long ago?

Down under the woman's unloving habit of complaint there was yet a well of affection deep and pure. It was rare that she drew from it the clear water of domestic love, wherewith to bless her household and herself; yet who shall say that these depths of affection did not somehow save her to a better life, poor even as it was, than else she might have known?

So all the day through she labored and loved as in her boy's babyhood, with a sort of clinging love which held on to its object and would not let it go. From picturing John sick, and in distress, and poorly cared for, she had gone back to that pleasanter picture of memory, where he was always a little fellow, with his silken hair, his pretty ways, his merry laugh, and where he would never grow old.

Burley did not return to dinner, and therefore she was quite undisturbed. Not until almost night-fall did she realize that a storm prevailed, one of those late winter storms with which Liscomb is occasionally visited, when a snow blockade sets in, that lasts, maybe, a week. When she did realize it, the storm had grown furious. Snow

had fallen from early morning with unremitting steadiness. Since mid-afternoon the wind had risen, and now it blew a gale. The air was blinding. She could not see into the street. The blasts howled about terrifically, and seemed to her a foreboding of pain.

During the next hour, until Burley came to supper, she was nervous and impatient. When he came, she must talk.

"We shall have a wild night of it," said he. "The storm is increasing."

"Yes, of course. It will be just my luck to have all the roads blocked so I can't go. I ought to have went this morning, and I knew it."

"But you would have had a severe journey, Mrs. Bremm. We have seen few more unpleasant days this season."

"I know. But what do I care for the storm, with John in trouble? I'd go to-night, bad as it is, if I could."

She went to the window again and looked out.

"Has the stage come through yet?" she asked.

"No. I waited for it a while, thinking there might be a letter. I'll go down once more, before the evening is over, and see. They'll get through to-night, I think, but it will be late. As for to-morrow" — he also went to the window and peered out into the semi-darkness — "it looks doubtful."

She could have cried for very vexation. But she did not. She only talked on, complainingly, as though Burley were to blame for the situation, until he had eaten his meal, and gone away to his room.

Two hours later he sallied out again, for the post-office, and returned soon, almost breathless with breasting the storm, bearing a letter.

"It's from John," he said, as he produced it.

She tore it open, eagerly. It had been written, as the

date showed, three or four days after the message sent by Speaker Bremm, but had nearly overtaken that upon the way. There was not much of it; only this:—

BAYLAN, *March* —, 185—.

DEAR MOTHER,— Uncle Israel has told you of my mishap. I hope you are not anxious about me. The doctor says it is not a bad fracture, and will mend perfectly. I am staying here with my friends, the Latimers, and am in excellent hands. They do all they can to make me comfortable, and if I were used to sitting quiet indoors, day after day, it would be very pleasant, barring some pain for a time. They brought me here on the night I was hurt, and will not hear to my leaving until able to ride. Of course you will not think of coming to see me, as it really is not worth while, so far as I am concerned, and besides, you would only add to the burthen on my friends. When my broken bone will admit, I shall come home. Give my regards to Hope, and tell 'Bert to write me all the news. Yours affectionately, JOHN BREMM.

Burley read the letter through when Mrs. Bremm had finished its perusal.

“Well, you see he is all right,” said he, “as I told you.”

“Israel might have told where he was, and in whose hands,” she answered. “See how much work 't would have saved me. I'm clear beat out with getting ready, and all of no use.”

And Burley, fearing further complaint, said a hasty good night, and left her to herself.

CHAPTER XXII.

LOOKING AHEAD.

THE days wore slowly away, more slowly to John Bremm than to any of his friends. He could not well help being restless and uneasy, much as was done for his amusement. He had come to feel the necessity, almost, of such mental excitement as the Capitol afforded. Besides, he wanted to see the Legislature in its last hours, with the fever of impatience and recklessness upon it. And all he could do was to sit or lie there, day after day, reading or read to, or talked to by members of the household or others who came in.

Yet it was a rest for him, and it gave him time to think. What his thoughts were did not always transpire, but they were very often pleasant thoughts. He had lived, mainly, a correct life. There was not much for him to look back upon with special regret. Those lapses from strict temperance seemed far off. It was as though another suffered them, and not himself. He even felt a sort of pity, now, for the weakness that could make such errors possible. Here, withdrawn from evil influences, he was very strong. Out in the world again, in some tomorrow full of heated, unhealthy social conditions, how would it be then ?

What his life was to be, in point of work, seemed a riddle. He had gone beyond the printer's case ; must he

now return to it? Vague dreams of a once impossible future were recalled. Was it still impossible? Might not the old dreams come true? He had won a little literary success; might he not somehow win more?

The old, old longing after fame and fortune — did ever men live and die without it? Did ever men live and die contented with its fulfillment? It is the heritage of the race. It is the one birthright which man never can sell for pottage. Men have forever kept it, and forever will keep it.

Geraldine Faythe called often at the Latimers', and usually looked in to cheer up their invalid. Before many days John came to look forward to these calls with eagerness. What this girl was to him he had not yet questioned. What he was to her would be secondary to that. He enjoyed her company; that he knew. She did him good like a medicine. She was uniformly cheerful, and her very laugh was music. She was the embodiment of sympathy, and more earnest than any one he had ever known.

John delighted to watch her as she talked. When most interested it seemed as if he could see her soul. Often her face glowed as with a light of transfiguration. Her full, beautiful eyes expressed more than her words.

Miss Faythe was not one to do unwomanly things; neither, as I have said, was she prudish. That she should not spend an occasional hour in ministering to the young man who was injured while trying to shield her, never entered her mind. Since early girlhood she had been a frequent visitor at the house where he was; she saw no reason why a regular custom should be changed. Indeed, to her thinking there was now a duty which called her there; and while to save any gossip she might have foregone a pleasure, she would do nothing to avoid a duty.

John had not forgotten Hope. He remembered her often. But he did not write to her as he had done. He could easily make excuses to himself for negligence or delay, and the same excuses were made in the few brief letters to his mother. He was weak, and suffered considerable pain, and there were so many callers it was impossible to write ; and so on.

By and by the session ended, and Speaker Bremm came. He had sent messages of inquiry two or three times since his former call, but had been too busy for more.

"I am going away to-morrow," he said, "and wanted to see you before leaving. You will be able to travel soon, will you not?"

"The doctor thinks I ought not to, for some days yet."

"Well, take your time. It would kill me to be shut up so long, but you are young, and have n't so much to do."

"No, my business is not pressing," and the young man smiled, a little sadly, perhaps.

"Of course your time has gone on until now. You will draw pay up to the close of the session, the same as though you had not been away."

"I had not expected that."

"You have no plans for the future?"

"None."

"I supposed not. Would you like to remain in Baylan a year or two?"

"Nothing would please me better."

"Then you may consider it all arranged. There is a place in one of the Departments which you can have. I have seen the Governor about it, and will see him again to-night. The appointment will be made to-morrow, and you will draw pay from time appointed."

"I am much obliged to you, I am sure," and his voice

trembled with feeling. "You are very kind to think about me so. If I can ever compensate in any way" —

"Never mind about that, John. You just take care of yourself, and get square on your pegs, and the rest will all come out right."

"Shall I stay on here in Baylan, then, without going home?"

"As you choose. I should say not, though. You will need a few days of change. Better go home as soon as you can, and begin work stronger and heartier."

"It will not be hard work?"

"Why, bless you, boy! Have you been here so long, and don't know that clerks are worked almost to death?" And the Speaker laughed sarcastically.

"Don't you know how many of them annually break down under it, and are compelled to retire to private life?" he continued. "You will be forced to labor from nine o'clock in the morning until five o'clock at night — if there's anything to do."

John laughed at the banter.

"Well, I'll do the best I can," he said.

They parted: Israel Bremm, to go among his constituents and lay pipe for reëlection, or promotion to the Senatorship—he was not yet determined which, but favored the latter; John, to speculate upon this new outlook, and to await, with what patience he might, the day when he could once more walk about, strong in body and sound of limb.

CHAPTER XXIII.

POLITICAL PLACE.

At last the injured limb had mended sufficiently to permit, and John returned to Liscomb. He could only walk with crutches, but to get about in any way was by this time a pleasure never realized before ; and while he chafed under such partial result, he was yet measurably glad.

His Liscomb friends rather lionized him, the first few days. Burley made him heartily welcome, and Mrs. Bremm said not a complaining word for hours after his return. "The boys," as John somewhat vaguely called his old associates of the printing office and the street, met him with the bluff cordiality which young America is given to, and at the first opportunity asked him what he would take.

Lying in his invalid room at the Latimers' it had seemed to John an easy thing thenceforward wholly to forswear the cup. He had not actually resolved that he would, but he had reasoned that to do so might be best. And he had determined not to indulge again under ordinary circumstances.

Now the circumstances were rather more than ordinary. These his friends were glad to see him back ; he must allow them to manifest their pleasure and regard ; he would drink to good-fellowship. The same idle, worse than idle, social plea has ruined many another than John

Bremm — will go on ruining such, I suppose, until the end. Did it ruin him? Of course not, then; perhaps never. We shall see.

He stayed at home nearly a month. All this time he mingled more or less with the free-hearted of his acquaintance. He had nothing to do but socialize: he had come for rest and recuperation. Home was not much pleasanter than before, after a little. He kept away from it all that he well could. "The Telescope" office was his lounging-place, and a very satisfactory one it was to him, but he must not sit there all the while. Every morning found him poring over Mr. Hensell's exchanges, but afternoons and evenings he spent mostly elsewhere. If the elsewhere had been always some saloon, it would have been far worse than it was; if always Mr. Hensell's parlor, it would have been far better.

He did spend many afternoons and evenings with Hope. In these days she seemed more like the little Hope of previous years, so frank and hearty was she. He had been unfortunate, and her quick sympathies went out to him freely. Invalidism had made him more tender, and perhaps she recognized in his manner something not quite a fact. They got on admirably together. He talked of Baylan and his experiences there, of his friends and their kindnesses to him. Of the Latimers he spoke unreservedly, as he had written: but of Miss Faythe he made little mention, or did not mention her at all.

They read to each other very much. John had somehow a gift at reading, and it was a real treat to listen to him. It did not always matter so much what he read. The charm was largely in his voice, which had more music in it than any other male voice I ever heard. I used to think he might make a rare singer, if only he

would culture himself, but strange to say, he never would. How he ever came to read or recite with so much grace and finish puzzled his friends to tell. He had never been trained in an elocutionary way; he had studied little to that special end. He was one of the few who seem intuitively to catch the proper emphasis and tone, and could express written sentiment as only the few ever can.

Hope, too, read well. This was less strange, since she was in training for elocutionary work as a teacher, and had already become quite proficient for one so young. Her voice was developing great strength and flexibility, and promised uncommonly. She had her dreams, after the manner of intellectual girls who expect soon to graduate. With John she talked of some of these. To be a public reader was not in those days so common an ambition as it is now. The average ambitious young lady chose some other "sphere." But it had somehow dawned upon Hope's mind that beyond a private teaching experience there might be greater things in store, and while she talked lightly of her dreams, they wore an air of substantiality to her, after all.

It satisfied Hope, that John came so often to see them. Her feelings concerning him, in the few months past, had been contradictory and annoying. Now that he seemed once more to care for her, to be happy in her society, a glad sense of rest came into her heart. Of the future there was no question. To her belief, for Hope Hensell had nothing of the coquette in her nature, he could be thus content with her companionship only because of regard like her own. And without thought of trifling, he really manifested a similar regard, and felt new thrills of pleasure daily at seeing how completely her manifestation answered back.

By and by he was able to resume work, and his play-

spell must end. "The Telescope" announced that "Mr. John Bremm, 'The Telescope's' brilliant young correspondent at Baylan," who had been spending some time in town to recuperate his health, was "about to return to the capital, having received an honorable appointment in the State service;" and of course it added some praiseful words that were gratifying to the young man's pride. He would continue his contributions to the paper, it was stated, and would write most entertainingly of Baylan affairs.

Mrs. Bremm wanted to sell their home, and go with John; but this proposition he opposed. Rents were too high in Baylan; there would be no gain in the plan, but a loss. Burley would stay with her another year, having been made a tutor in the academy, and it was better for her to remain where she was. Thus he reasoned to her. To himself he argued that he could make her no happier with him than she would be otherwise; and though this may not be just our idea of filial duty, he knew Mrs. Bremm a great deal better than we could have known her, and perhaps we should concede something to his superior knowledge.

CHAPTER XXIV.

COBLE'S CAVE.

BACK again in Baylan, John found life there in summer quite delightful. It seemed very quiet at the Capitol, in comparison with the busy bustle of legislation, but this change was rather agreeable than otherwise. The roomy old building was well-nigh deserted. At intervals a delegation came to wait upon his Excellency, or an individual called to pay his respects and ask some favor. But the crowd was gone. Until another winter the rotunda would be empty of occupants: the offices of State would not be overrun with visitors; the business of a great Commonwealth would go on without sign of friction or haste.

The young man's place was in a department close by the Executive, and amid pleasant surroundings. Its several rooms were more beautifully fitted up than any parlors he had been familiar with before coming to Baylan; and from each the outlook was fine. From the room wherein his desk stood, the view was especially attractive, taking in the handsome Capitol Park, the public buildings on the left beyond, and the wide range of Province Street, sloping riverward. It was surely a good spot in which to play at work, and John thanked fortune that without the seeking he had gained so much.

He secured another boarding-place, also on Gull Street, but was happy in his choice, and found it very like a home. The good old Quakeress who kept it forgot her

“thees” and “thous” occasionally, but was a good Quaker, nevertheless, and her quaintness of character, her uniform repose, charmed him from the first. Things rarely went wrong with her. If the housekeeper grew peevish and fretful, or flared up in a heat of passion, the old lady just let her fret or flame it out. As this housekeeper had temper the quickest, such scenes were not uncommon, yet the house was well kept, and the table well supplied.

The Latimers welcomed John's return. In his long tarry with them their mutual liking had increased, and he seemed quite like one of the family. Their home was his one place of resort, socially, for many months. Save occasional calls on Miss Faythe, he went about little. Through his Excellency's favor he was permitted to draw books from the State Library, and these occupied much of his leisure time. He wrote more than heretofore, too, and in other styles than epistolary; tried essays, sketches, and rhyme. As his efforts found editorial recognition, and blossomed into print, he was stimulated to further attempting, and labored with increased will.

The Latimer association, the friendship of Geraldine Faythe, his love for books — these saved him from much that would have proved a curse. These kept him from intimate outside socializing with the dissolute. At rare intervals, only, did he overstep the strictest total abstinence. Had these intervals never occurred, had his abstaining been absolute, and because of a fixed resolution, instead of intermittent and largely the result of conditions, he would have been safe. He thought himself safe, as it was. Were his prison bars slowly forging, meanwhile? Would there be need, by and by, of a way of escape?

A long, happy summer was near its end. The Latimers

had planned an excursion to Coble's Cave ; it had been talked of in the little circle for weeks. The day was fixed, the party made up. As on other occasions, John would escort Miss Faythe.

Coble's Cave is forty miles from Baylan, on the Quonosque Railroad. Our party took the early morning train, and reached there about nine o'clock. Leaving the cars where neither platform nor depot offered accommodation, they saw, off at their right, twenty rods up the hill-side, a long, rambling hotel, and Hull Latimer called out, —

"Where on earth does Mr. Coble keep his cave, I wonder?"

"Change your preposition, Hull," said John. "Nobody ever saw a cave on earth, did there?"

"Don't imply that they are running this cave business into the ground," was Hull's answer. "Wait till we say good-by to daylight."

They walked up to the Cave House, which fronts the narrow valley, and covers the cave's entrance. Being duly booked for the subterranean trip, they engaged a guide, and set about personal preparations.

"Good-by, ladies," said Sturdevant, as the fair portion of the party left the sitting-room with a young woman, to don their several costumes. Sturdevant had been here before, and knew what a metamorphosis awaited them. "Good-by! we shall not see you again till night."

"What do you mean?" asked Geraldine Faythe. "We are surely not going in without you?"

He laughed.

"I'll be there ; so will all of us—but the ladies. I never saw any one go in who looked the least bit like a lady."

His talk mystified others than Miss Faythe, but the mystery solved itself soon enough.

The gentlemen were not long in donning old blouses, and making ready for a start. They gathered in the sitting-room, a motley group, laughing at each other's dress, and wondering if the girls would recognize each through such disguise. In an adjoining apartment the girls were indulging a wonder similar, and were making merry over toilets never dreamed of in any previous masquerading. When they appeared, the wonder and surprise were mutual.

Each young lady had donned pants, snugly tied down at the ankle ; a blouse of red flannel, with a belt of black at the waist ; and a turban-like head covering of white, as a crown for the whole. It was really a picturesque uniform, but the transformation surpassed anything in the gentlemen's disguising.

"Shades of Bloomer !" ejaculated John Bremm ; "which is which ?"

"They are all whitches," said Hull. "Where are the broomsticks ?"

"Witches come from below," said Sturdevant ; "we are going there. But didn't I say we should not see any ladies till our return ? Where are they now ?"

"If you libel them that way," was Hull's comment, "they'll seek redress."

"We are all here," said Gus Latimer, when they had ceased laughing over the situation. "Can't you pick us out ?"

"Can a fellow have his pick ?" some one inquired. "If so, I'll take" —

"No, no !" screamed several in response.

So they went on, joking and laughing until the guide came, when they paired off and marched away, going through the cellar, and taking torches as they passed.

The change of temperature was very marked as they passed into the cave, and sent a shiver over all.

"Rather a cool reception we have," said Hull Latimer.

"Lucky we brought our lamps along," said John, "so we can see the darkness."

In the total night which reigned, their torches flared out weirdly indeed. They made a picturesque procession, as they carefully picked their way along, and John purposely kept in the rear, with Miss Faythe, that they might drop a little behind the rest occasionally, to observe the effect. It was very striking.

There is not much of beauty or interest in the cave for a mile or more. Our party passed through various halls, of varied lengths, breadths, and heights, bearing sundry pretentious names, but destitute of special subterranean attraction. In one they could hear the roar of a distant water-fall, which the guide said could not be discovered; and just beyond came to the Bottomless Pit—all caves have such a thing, I believe—and gathered round its uninviting depth. Their lamps only shot feeble rays a few feet downward, and the guide's statement that the pit had been sounded many hundreds of feet without striking bottom, was not hard to believe.

"What a yawning chasm!" some one remarked, melodramatically.

"I'll tell you what makes it yawn so," was Hull's rejoinder: "being bored."

"Spare your bad puns, Hull," said his sister Gus.

"It's the good ones he's sparing of," said Sturdevant, and this sally provoked general laughter.

Musical Hall they found one of the most extensive, and the pleasantest, of all they had explored. A small stream flows through it, and alongside, for a fourth of a mile at least, there is a smooth pathway, while overhead the regular, solid ceiling throws back sound in a surprising manner.

It was here that something very startling occurred. They were filing along, glad to find smooth footing again, after so much of roughness and discomfort, and were hoping that the rest of the journey might prove as pleasant as this portion. Suddenly a moment's silence was broken by an explosion that seemed to have rent all the ground beneath them, and shattered all the rock above. There was a wild chorus of screams from the ladies, in which some of the gentlemen joined, and the deafening roar and the piercing cries went resounding up and down the long gallery, rolling back into the distance, and returning in diminished power, for a long moment of suspense, in which each wondered what awful happening it was.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN UNDER-GROUND EXPERIENCE.

WHEN our party realized how little there was to excite apprehension, they laughed heartily over their fright. No explosion had taken place. It was only a petty device of the guide to arouse consternation and surprise. Passing ahead of all, he had unnoticed raised one end of a heavy plank, and dropped it back upon the unyielding sand. The hall's reverberating qualities had magnified the report an hundred fold.

After testing the echoes in many ways, they went on to the lake, — a narrow reach of water perhaps eighty rods in length. It is shut in by solid walls of rock, and above it is the rocky ceiling, seventy feet overhead. Only half the party could find room in the crazy old boat which was at hand, and while they paddled the lake's length, the rest waited, in admiration of the picture they made. So strangely clear was the water that the torches reflected many feet below its surface, and the boat appeared as if moving through the air.

Hull and John were of the second boat-load, and numerous were the strokes of repartee which they indulged in. Here for the first time they saw stalactites, and as many of these boasted names high-sounding if not appropriate, there was sufficient opportunity for sportive remark. Disembarking, they found the main passage closed by a monster stalagmite, and were obliged to

climb up one side, creep through a passage narrow and unpleasant, and descend by a dangerous path to the passage beyond. One curious stalagmite soon drew their attention. It was uncommonly clear, and of course it had a name befitting some fancied resemblance.

"That is Lot's wife, turned to a pillar of salt," said the guide.

"What did Lot do when his wife was turned into salt?" inquired Hull Latimer.

"Why, he got a fresh one, certainly," was Lottie Ray's answer.

The Giant's Library is not far beyond, where one immense flat rock stands for the table, and near by is a pile of smaller ones, regarded as the books.

"I see they have heavy works in under-ground libraries, as well as above," said Hull, as they passed on. "Who knows but some prehistoric Tupper was buried here?"

The Rocky Mountains rose ruggedly before them, ere they had gone much farther, not a fit comparison with the original article, but sufficiently hard to climb; and when all reached the Valley of Jehoshaphat, they were giddy and tired. Beyond this, in the Winding Way, they sat down in the Silent Chamber to rest. The Way is narrow and tortuous, a mere cleft in the rock, just wide enough for one person to stand in, and varying in height from ten feet to a hundred. Going a few rods along its labyrinthine crookedness, you come to a small room which is the chamber of silence; and here our party paused.

"This," said the guide, "is probably the stillest and the darkest place on earth."

"In it, you mean, don't you?" John asked.

"Yes, in it; for we are now over four miles, by actual measurement, from the entrance, and about 1500 feet

below the surface of the mountain over us. We will put out our torches and sit a moment in darkness."

The torches were extinguished, and it was as though sun, moon or stars never shone.

"Let each take a long breath," the guide suggested, "and then let no one move, if you want to realize darkness and silence both. Now!"

A hearty inspiration followed.

"Hold on there!" sung out a voice. "Some one took part of my breath. Let's start fair."

They laughed at such absurd interruption, but renewed the attempt.

Had they lived so long and never known stillness before? So it seemed. There was no sound of dripping water, no stir of breeze-touched leaf, no pulsation of air. The silence was absolute, and even painful.

"Ho! Lucifer! a match!" shouted Abner Latimer, presently.

The guide produced one, and its feeble flicker was welcome indeed.

"Blessed are the match-makers!" ejaculated Hull, and the long breath he drew was all his own. "I think even an old flame would be worth while, here."

"Hull never forgets the old flame," said Sturdevant, whereat they laughed.

" 'T is better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all, ' "

quoted Hull, in reply.

"Oh come, now!" was Gus Latimer's impatient reminder. "Don't go to raking in the ashes. Flame is suggestive."

"So are ashes suggestive," said Hull, with a little sarcasm in his tone — "suggestive of lye."

"Was the old flame untruthful, then," queried Sturdevant. "Did she talk soft soap to you, Hull?"

It was a fancy of Miss Faythe's that Hull had known some unpleasant experience with her kind, and she feared there was more meaning under some of his badinage than they fairly understood. She was glad that the guide interrupted.

"Beyond us is the Fat Man's Misery and the Rotunda," he announced. "Will you go any further?"

"A fat man in misery!" said John. "I never saw a fat man who was not jolly. Fun and flesh go together always, I thought. Show us the fat man, and let us see where the misery comes in."

"He comes into the misery," the guide answered, "if he an't too fat."

They found the place, not far beyond. The passage dipped down, at an abrupt angle, and narrowed almost as abruptly to a small hole in the rock, through which one could go only by crawling.

"If there's any fat man here, I propose he try the passage for the amusement of his friends," said John. "Sturdevant?"

"Let Hull try it," was Sturdevant's answer. "He might chant a *Miserere* over the lost love when he gets in."

"I don't lean that way," Hull rejoined.

They found the passage so full of water that no one could go through, and began retracing their steps. On the Rocky Mountains the guide stopped.

"Go ahead twenty or thirty rods without me," he said, "and wait there."

They filed along down the rough descent and paused, as directed. By the guide's torch they could just discern him perched on the rocky height. An instant later he had fired a quantity of red light, and the illumination was

wildly, weirdly beautiful. A red, unearthly glow shot far up towards the ceiling above, and threw its ray along the entire passage to where they stood. Beyond the burning altar, as it seemed, the guide's figure stood out in bold relief, a presence spectral indeed. When the red light had burned dim, the guide discharged some Roman candles, and their white fire-balls, glancing hither and thither through the dark spaces, seemed like meteors shooting through an unknown sky.

"Isn't it magnificent!" exclaimed Geraldine Faythe.

Her expression found numerous echoes, for none of the party had ever beheld anything equal to it in singular beauty of effect.

Midway of the Lake another illumination was had, more beautiful still, and more striking. Every stalactite was thrown out in clear relief by the strong light, the clear, unrippled water acting as a reflector; and the party looked on in bewildered amazement until the scene was over.

The way was surprisingly long, returning, which had been surprisingly short at first, and all were fatigued when again they saw daylight. A strange, sickening sensation beset each, as they ascended the stairway and filed into the sitting-room they had left six hours before. The sudden change from fifty degrees of temperature to ninety degrees, was like stepping from a cellar into an oven.

Miss Faythe was walking near to John as they passed into the sitting-room. Realizing the unpleasant sensations himself, he looked at her. All color had gone out of her face. She looked at him, and attempted to speak, but reeled, and would have fallen, but that he caught her in his arms.

"She has fainted," he said, to those who gathered round.

Instantly all was commotion, and the rest forgot their discomfort in attempts to render aid.

Geraldine rallied quickly, and tried to sit up.

"The heat was suffocating," she said.

As she still felt weak and faint, she begged them to let her lie quiet on the couch, where they had placed her, while they all went and changed their dress. Assured that she would not need their help, they left her there. Only John stayed.

"I will wait till the girls return," he said, nor would he go.

"You are all tired out," he declared, pityingly.

She smiled at his evident care.

"I will be rested soon. I did not realize any weariness until now."

She closed her eyes languidly, as she spoke.

"It was a long, exhausting tramp," he said, as if now first fully comprehending the fact. "I only wonder you could have made it at all. You are not sorry, though?"

"Oh, no. It was grand. I shall always remember it, and thank you."

She opened those rare eyes of hers, and looked at him with the thanks she hardly syllabled eloquent in her face.

He took her hand, and the pressure he gave it was faintly returned.

"To give you any pleasure is the dearest pleasure I know," he said, a quick thrill possessing him.

Her pale cheeks flushed, and she shut her eyes again to hide the light his words called there.

He would have said more, but just then Abner Latimer came in.

"How's your appetite for dinner?" he asked of Geraldine. "It's all ready for us, and I am hungry as a bear."

So do the grosser things of life crowd in upon sentiment.

"I will go and arrange for it," she said, looking down at her unusual costume, while her cheeks flushed hotly. "I am all right now."

John helped her to the ladies' dressing-room, and himself went to make ready.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A GOOD DAY.

THE dinner was a plain, substantial affair, but every one of our little party had the relish of appetite. Never dinner tasted better than did this.

"I hope you fainted from hunger, Miss Faythe," said Hull, "so that you may enjoy eating. I never knew food to taste so well but once before ; that was atop of Mount Washington."

"I hardly know why I fainted," deprecatingly. "I am not commonly troubled with faintness."

"It was the most natural thing in the world," Hull answered. "This change from cold to heat was a shock to us all. I would have fainted myself — if I'd had any one to catch me."

Hull liked to quiz.

"No one will ever think you much of a catch," said his sister Gus.

The girls laughed.

"I think a little of that cave every day would do us good," said Sturdevant. "It's an excellent tonic."

"Would n't it do as well to go and walk an hour or two in some cellar?" inquired John.

"No, you can't accelerate recovery that way," put in Hull. "Invalids find no lasting cure until put under ground."

"Your doct'rin' is bad if that is what it leads to," said

Sanborn, sarcastically. Sanborn was studying medicine, and resented any insinuations against his profession.

"My doctrine is as good as your doct'rin' ever will be," Hull parried.

"He has been successful in one important case, already," Belle Latimer said, laughing. "Disease of the heart, was it not, doctor?"

He flushed perceptibly. Agnes Currey, who sat next him, blushed in turn.

"There is only one recourse for a young lady with that trouble," Hull declared. "She must hunt up a country curate."

It was pretty well known that Miss Currey had a friend, who was quite attentive, who presided over a rural parish. They were all amused at Hull's raillery, — pointed, but so delicate that none could object.

"You must understand that there are two kinds of heart disease," said Mr. Sanborn, "organic and sympathetic."

"One kills people, and the other don't," Hull interrupted. "It's the sympathetic everybody has. No one dies with it."

"I've seen people who were tolerably sickish, though," remarked Abner Latimer.

"They had just been married, — or were just going to be, poor things, I suppose," Hull said. "It has that effect sometimes. I saw a young couple last week, on the Rhine River Railroad, who were troubled that way, and I have to laugh yet to think about it. We were approaching the Long Tunnel, and the young man knew it. His arm had been tenderly dropping down around her, for some minutes. He had not observed that a brakeman had lighted the lamps, but I saw that he kept close watch of the landmarks. As we shot into the Tunnel he stole his

opportunity, and a kiss. Then he happened to note that it was n't so very dark around, after all, and then he saw the lights. The look on his face, when he comprehended that we had all been watching him, was equal to any the Fat Man ever put on in his misery."

Hull laughed again over the recollection, and the others could not help joining in.

"Speaking of railway kisses," said John, when they had grown quiet, "reminds me that I have a droll little story to tell. When I was returning to Baylan this summer, in the same car with me was a mother and her little girl. The mother was a very beautiful woman, and the child her perfect image in miniature. I never saw so bright and pretty a thing. Every one admired and petted her, one middle-aged man, in particular, who sat near, noticed and played with her very much. By and by he arose to leave. 'Are you going now?' the child asked. 'Yes, my little lady,' said he, 'won't you let me kiss you good-by?' She started to put up her lips, when a happy thought suggested itself, and drawing back she asked eagerly, 'Would n't you rather kiss mamma?'"

"He looked as if he would," John went on, when they had ceased laughing, "but yet he seemed rather confused about it."

"The cars are due in fifteen minutes," Abner Latimer announced. "Had n't we better get the train, and take the rest of our railway kisses as we go along?"

"If you can get them, better say," added Belle.

The ride home was a somewhat quiet one. All were tired. All were glad when Baylan was reached at last, just before dusk.

John walked homeward from the depot with Miss Faythe.

"You will come in a while," she said, as they paused at her door. "Come in and rest."

He went in, a nameless longing at his heart. All the day through some subtle influence had been drawing him irresistibly to her. Her beauty never had thrilled him as it thrilled him now.

"It has been a good day," she said, after a moment's silence.

"Yes, a very good day," he echoed back. "It is one of those days to keep."

"Yes," simply, while her expressive eyes looked far away into distance.

"If we could only keep it together!" he said tenderly, a moment later.

She turned a look upon him such as he had never seen till now.

"What do you mean?" she asked, as much in hope as in doubt, if one might have judged by her face.

And then neither of them knew how much would turn upon his answer.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE OLD STORY.

"I MEAN that I shall want you all my life," John replied.

Until now he had not realized the intensity of his regard for her. That intensity seemed to grow, in its very expression.

"I love you, Geraldine."

Very common-place, the expression was, — very old and common-place indeed. Yet for both these hearts it had a wonderful newness.

"I love you, Geraldine," and his voice trembled as he repeated the words. "I am very poor, but I shall be richer, always, for having known you."

She did not speak, but breath came quick and fast. It seemed to her that he must hear each heart-throb.

"You have helped me so much!"

He paused, still looking away from her, rather than into her face.

"I am very glad," she said, presently.

"Glad that you have helped me, only?"

"No ; glad of it!"

Her voice was low and tender, and the thrill in it told him more than the few words syllabled. He, too, was glad, and with a great joy.

By and by he spoke again, impelled by a natural feeling of surprise.

"It seems strange that you should care for me," he said.

"Why?"

"You have been loved and sought by so many who were more worthy of you. I can not offer you such as they could."

"You can care for me, it seems."

"Care!"

She read a wealth of meaning in this one word, as he uttered it.

"They could not do more, for any woman. For me they could not do as much. I have never worn my heart on my sleeve, for the daws to peck at. I could not love any one whom I did not first respect as my superior."

He was pleased, of course, by her assurance. So sweet a token could not but lift him higher in his own estimation.

They sat long together, in that rare communion which supplements and completes a love first confessed. There were new possibilities for the first time to come, and some hint of these took hold on both.

"It has been a good day," he said again, when at last he arose to leave.

"Yes, a *very* good day," and the emphasis of her smile was all he could have desired.

"I will bring a ring for you to wear in remembrance of it, and bearing the same date. Shall I not?"

"I shall never forget," she said simply.

"Never forget that you are mine?" he asked, kissing her upturned face.

"Never. I could not be another's, after this."

Often in later days did he see her as she stood with him then, her lovely face radiant, her soulful eyes glowing with the love so freely given, her noble womanliness

speaking out in full renunciation of all he could not bring into her life. And so often did he wish that he might have died with nothing between him and this picture—with no memories of bane to shadow this one bright memory of blessing.

“But I will bring the ring, and you shall wear it as my seal of ownership,” and with this he said a tender good-night, and went away.

Up in the solitude of her chamber Geraldine Faythe knelt down and thanked God. Have I told you that she was an earnest believer in prayer?—that her name symbolized her character? I do not remember. But telling it would have been only telling the truth. Now she believed this new relationship right and just, because these many months she had prayed about it, and had asked daily that unless it were right no love-words would ever be spoken. Some who little knew “the brilliant and accomplished Miss Faythe,” as she was frequently called, would not have believed her thus conscientious and trustful. There were those who thought her chief aim was to marry position and fortune. We who knew her best were certain she would never give her hand where her heart could not accompany it, and were equally certain that to confess her love would be with her a matter of conscientious care.

She had long realized that she felt toward John Bremm as she had never felt toward any other man. She had realized—as what woman does not realize, under similar circumstances?—that she was more to him than a passing friend. She had hoped, with a hope modesty did not forbid, that there might come mutual confidence and affection. For love had lent glamour to its object, as love always will. She saw the best that was in John, and the best was very good. With her, and the little society they

moved in, he was always at his best. His possibilities for bad she thought little of — less, indeed, than did he.

So, as I have said, she thanked God. The way had been made ; the words had been spoken. Bound in the chains of her love she rejoiced as gladly as ever did the veriest slave set free.

And John ?

He was not given to praying, — this was the one thing about him which Geraldine troubled over. He had rarely thought of his probable future relations to her. Knowing that he liked her company, and that she cheerfully accorded it, had been enough. What they might or might not be to each other he had not dwelt upon at all.

This day's results, as a consequence, were to him almost like a surprise. He had not dreamed that any day held for him such a store. He went out into the night in a kind of happy wonder, — wonder that so, without expectation, he had come into rare possession.

He went to his room more pleased than he had ever been before. His pleasure had a new element in it, — a something sweeter and more satisfying than pleasures commonly hold. There was no sense of want, any more. His life seemed full. He even felt a strange glow of thankfulness, and looked up to the stars with a vague, unexpressed if not inexpressible, gratitude. In a degree, at least, he recognized the Eternal Goodness which speaks to us, often so softly that we do not hear its whisper, through all sincere human love.

Reaching his room he was in no haste to retire. Weary, as he must naturally have been, from the day's fatigue, he was yet restless and little disposed to sleep. So he turned to his writing table, thinking to find some book that suited his mood. There his eyes fell upon what shocked him like a blow.

It was a letter from Hope. He had received it the night before, and had laid it there after reading. To his consciousness, all this long day through, Hope Hensell had not lived. Now her sudden resurrection roused him as from a dream. They had been such good friends, he and Hope. What would Hope say?

For Hope must know. He would tell her, of course. And again he thought—what would she say? She liked him, certainly. He knew that. It had been a pleasant knowledge to him. She liked him, and possibly so well she would not gladly hear what now he had to tell. But he had not trifled with her, he reasoned. Had he not liked her in return? Had he ever sought her love? Had he been more to her than just a good friend? Why should she not know and be glad over his fortune?

Yet he could not quite forget the tenderness he had many times shown towards her, nor the shy readiness with which she had made response. And less happy than he should have been, he thrust the letter out of sight, and sought to sleep.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

POLITICAL MISSION.

SUMMER came to a close. Autumn wore on into the flush of October's glory. The mountains were everywhere robed in their royal vestments, and inviting homage. Every day was like a psalm of praise.

John saw the elms and maples flaming out upon him, even as the burning bush flamed out upon God's servant of old. In the Park, which formed his daily outlook, and along the streets, there was a warmth of color that somehow made life itself a warmer and a gladder thing. Morning by morning he looked far over the city, sloping riverward—across the wide reach of water, busy with its various busy craft—over the straggling town which lined its farther bank—away up to the mountain peaks beyond, where glow of forest and glory of sky met and melted each into each. And day by day he felt a growing longing after Liscomb's autumnal beauties,—an increasing desire to stand again upon the hill-top back of his old home, and enjoy once more the old outlook. To him, as possibly in a greater or less degree to all, each perfect October day was a recollection. It was as though the year had paused to remember, and he must remember with it.

He had not cared to think much of Liscomb for a while past. As usual, there had been the weekly letter to his mother; the regular letter for print; an occasional one

to Albert Burley, and, at longer intervals, one to Hope. But these had been incidental. They were not his daily being, or any considerable sum of it. Those friends at Liscomb were outside and apart; his life was not now of them, or for them. He lived, largely, a life within himself. So far as it reached outward, it was to the touching chiefly of Geraldine Faythe.

She wore the ring he gave her. She seemed glad, all the time, of his love and his claim. More than ever before she helped him and strengthened him. She suggested very many things to his thoughtful consideration, that hitherto he had been indifferent about. In ways so delicate he scarcely noticed, she turned his mind more and more to soberer purposes and nobler plans. She so took hold upon him that he knew no other possessing, and was content.

True, he had still a little doubt concerning his relations with Hope. It did not trouble him much, though, after the first few days. By and by he would tell her about it, he argued. It was better not to write. Words on paper were sometimes cold and unsatisfactory. He would wait and talk with her face to face. So he had waited; and yet now, when he desired to visit Liscomb, he felt inclined to wait still longer. His desire was twofold, and contradictory. It haunted him all through a month of surprising beauty and inspiration. Every one remarked how late the foliage held on that year. As a rare exception, there were no frosts, and each leaf came to its perfection of tint naturally, and in its own good time.

One day the Governor sent for him. It was getting towards election time, and there was unusual interest developing in the campaign.

"Would you not like to go home for a few days, Bremm?" his Excellency inquired, when John came into his presence.

"I have been thinking of it," he answered.

"That is right—that is right." His Excellency was given to affirming the expressions of his friends in some such vague but very affable way.

"There is a little matter at Liscomb, and about there, which you can look to," he went on. "I know you are discreet, and will do what is for the best. You had better arrange to go on Saturday, and stay until after election. Come in to-morrow, and Colonel Gessner will give you all needed instructions," and the Governor bowed him out.

Next day he received his instructions from the Governor's private secretary, and that evening took leave of Geraldine for a week. On Saturday he went home. He was proud of a mission from his Excellency—proud of such a mark of confidence. It was a very simple matter of political business,—a bit of wire-pulling which any one could have done, having his cue; but this did not lessen his good feeling over it.

The journey was a fitting end to all this month of remembrance and desire. Never shone a rarer October day. Never did late-autumn tints hold such a brilliance as they held then. The scenery of the Little Rhine valley was more beautiful than ever it had seemed before. John's poetic soul was in a quiet ecstasy of delight, until the journey ended at last, and he stepped from his seat on the stage to the platform in front of the Park House.

"Hello, Bremm!" shouted a familiar voice, and one of his former office associates shook him warmly by the hand. "Glad to see you back! Come in and take something."

"No, thank you, Lafferty. No occasion."

"Oh! but you must! You're dry as a fish, of course, after such a ride. Come along!"

And John went.

At the bar he hesitated.

"What shall it be?" said Lafferty.

Geraldine's face came up before him, as a veritable presence.

"Only a lemonade, this time, Jo."

"Not even a stick in it?" questioned Lafferty again, with a laugh.

"No."

They took their drinks — Lafferty had a "stick" in his — and walked outside. As they stepped on the hotel piazza, John saw Hope crossing the street.

"Good night, Jo," said he, "I'll see you again to-morrow," and passing hastily along he joined her at the opposite corner.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TWO EVENINGS.

"WHY, John!" she said, quite surprised. "When did you come?"

"Just got in. Are n't you glad to see me back?"

"Of course," and she looked her pleasure. "I began to think you must be going to come, because you did not write."

"Has it been such a long time, then?" his voice catching its old trick of tenderness.

"You haven't written to me in a month, and I sent you four whole sheets for my last letter."

"I know I have been very remiss, and I deserve a scolding. Will you give it to me now, or when you reach home?"

"If you've any excuses to offer I'll hear them now."

"Nothing but this: I have been so homesick the whole month past I did not like to think of writing. The autumn beauty has bewitched me, I imagine. I never wanted to see home and all, so, before."

"Then the spell was not of your friends and home, but of the season?" she queried, doubtfully. She caught something of his meaning.

"Both—you must know that," and he looked so earnestly into her face, that she was satisfied.

At Mr. Hensell's gate he stopped.

"You will come in to supper?" said Hope. "Your

mother is not expecting you, and it will make no difference with her."

"Supper and the scolding?" he asked, laughing.

"No; I'll forgive you this time. Supper and a good visit. Come."

It might as well be now as ever, he thought. He would tell her of Geraldine, after tea. So he passed into the house.

Mrs. Hensell met him, as she always did, with motherly affection.

"It is good to see you with us again, John," she said. "You are improved, too. Baylan agrees with you, I guess."

"Yes, except when it breaks my bones."

"You are all over that, are you not? I see you do not carry any cane."

"The fracture healed perfectly, thanks to a skillful surgeon," he answered.

"You are fortunate, indeed. So many are left with a limp."

They talked of Liscomb affairs, Hope's school matters, and the like, until Mr. Hensell came. His greeting was especially cordial. He saw more and more in John, and predicted much for his future. "John is growing," he had only that morning said to Hope. "By and by he will surprise us all."

"You did well to run up for a few days," he declared. "Stay until after election, of course?"

"Yes, sir."

"Lively times here in this district—a sort of three-cornered fight, for Assembly. Fairchild is ahead, but they are pulling everything to beat him. We must do all we can to win."

"I came up partly for that. Our folks must have the

Assembly next winter, sure, or lose United States Senator."

"The Governor expects that, I suppose?"

"He does n't say much, of course, but that is on the slate. Uncle Israel is up for Senator from his district, and writes me he is sure to be elected. If the Governor goes to Washington he may be a candidate for the gubernatorial chair."

"Your Uncle Israel is a rising man, and will succeed anywhere. You are lucky in having him for a backer."

And thus they talked on, through the supper hour, and while Mr. Hensell remained. After he left for his evening visit to the post-office, Hope and John were alone together.

For a while they spoke of indifferent things — his last published sketch, her recent essay, the books they had lately read. It was easy to lead the conversation on to every subject but the one he felt must be broached. And now that he was with her — now that she seemed so glad of his presence, and so sure of his regard — his purpose weakened. Was it needful, after all, that he do as he had proposed? Why not let the old intimate relationship between them have its way, as hitherto? She might refuse him her sisterly affection and sympathy, if she knew. And these were very sweet. He had not known how much he cared for them until now he must put them in peril.

So, questioning and doubting, the short evening wore away, and he must leave. He arose, half glad of some excuse he might make to himself for further postponement, and went away.

His mother had heard of his arrival, through Albert Burley, and was impatiently waiting for him.

"Who did you come home to see?" she asked with some petulance.

"Oh, everybody," and he laughed. "Met Hope down street, and went home with her to supper. I knew you would n't be looking for me."

"Seems to me if you'd cared very much for your mother, you'd 'a' come home first."

Her habit of complaint had not lessened any, he saw.

"What is Hope Hensell to you, that you should want to see her most?"

"Nothing, mother, only my friend. And I should have come straight home if I had not chanced to meet her."

He was annoyed by her reception, but spoke calmly enough.

She muttered her significant "Humph!" and fell to talking of other affairs in her usual complaining way.

The week went by. John was busy part of the time with looking after things political, but found opportunity to see much of his friends. One day he and Albert drove out to the old home, and spent some hours there, going to Albert's home, toward night, for supper. "'Bert has a mother, now, to be glad of," thought John, as he saw Mrs. Burley moving quietly about the house, her serene face and placid voice sure evidence of a soul serene and placid.

"What difference there is in mothers!" he said to 'Bert, as they were walking up the hill after tea, to enjoy sunset from his old lookout. "Your mother is a saint!"

"No; but she will be, sometime," answered 'Bert, softly. "I hope the time is far distant though. We could n't get along without mother. She is the heart of our home."

'Bert rarely said a great deal, but what he said had always its meaning.

They climbed the summit in silence, and for half an hour they sat there on a huge boulder, rapt in the sun-

set's glory. It was not a place for much speech, with two who could feel as deeply all impressive influences as could these. When they descended into the deepening twilight below, they were silent still ; and little was said by either as they rode back to the village.

Election passed off, amid more than the usual local excitement. Fairchild was among the successful candidates, and gave a little supper to his friends, the evening of the next day, at which John was called out for a speech. It was his maiden effort, and though applauded to the echo was very unsatisfactory to him, and greatly increased his respect for those fortunate men who can think on their legs. Wine circulated freely, and of course John must drink. The more he drank, the more he wanted to drink, and for the first time he went home quite intoxicated. Fortunately, the rest of the company were not in much better condition, and thought nothing of it, and he escaped observation on the street. Fortunately, again, his mother was in bed, and Albert away. But next day he was full of bitterness and remorse.

"Fool that I am," he thought, when at a late hour he woke and recalled the evening's excess. "I deserve hanging." He thought of Geraldine, as he said this to himself. How could he touch her pure lips, on his return ? Then he thought of Hope. What would she say, if she knew ?

He dressed slowly, took his breakfast in such a dejected manner that his mother actually forbore all complaint, and sauntered aimlessly down street. Nearly the whole day he sat in "The Telescope" office, thinking his bitter thoughts. Several came in and complimented him on his speech ; more than one asked him out to drink. Compliment and invitation were alike distasteful to him. He wanted to get away from them all.

Toward night he went over to Mr. Hensell's. His bitter mood was wearing off, and he longed for pleasant companionship. Moreover, he was to start for Baylan next morning, and this would be his last opportunity with Hope.

Hope met him with more than her usual cordiality of welcome.

"You have made your debut as an orator, I hear," she said. "Father was at the supper, and heard your speech. He said it was capital."

"Did he stay until the close?" John hoped not, but he asked the question hesitatingly. He had wanted to ask it of Mr. Hensell himself all day.

"No. He came away early, for he had work to do."

John was thankful for that, since now Hope might never know of his temptation and fall.

At the very last, it was no easier to speak of the special subject he felt most need to mention. If the day's bitterness had not made him somewhat desperate, he might have let it go unmentioned even now.

"You have been a good little friend to me, Hope," he said at length, drawing her to him in brotherly familiarity. "I think more of your friendship than I can tell."

She answered his caress in her own shy way, which somehow seemed so peculiar to herself.

"You will always be my friend, will you not?"

"Always."

"I cannot afford to lose you out of my life," he went on.

She made no answer, but he felt her slight form tremble, and in spite of himself he could not add a word. By and by, when he broke silence again, it was in such a changed and trembling voice that she looked at him half in affright.

"What if I have another good friend?" he asked.

Her strange, luminous eyes shone with a light in them he never saw before.

"I do not understand," she answered, her voice also changed.

"I have written to you of Geraldine Faythe?"

"You never spoke of her as specially your friend — you have hardly spoken of her at all."

He knew not what to say. She trembled in his clasp like a frightened fawn hid from the hunter.

"Is she specially your friend?" she asked, almost under her breath.

It seemed to him now that he would give worlds to be able to say "No," — to tell this trembling, trusting friend he wanted no other friendship and love than hers. What he was to this heart, beating so hard and fast so near his own, it required no words to syllable.

"Yes; she is very specially my friend: she has promised to be my wife."

It was told, finally. There was no more to say.

Hope did not draw away from him, as some would have felt called upon to do. With her head resting upon his shoulder, and his arm still encircling her, she sat there for many moments, speechless as he. It seemed, indeed, as if she could not speak. Her throat was full; she felt as she afterward imagined people to feel when suffocating. When he went on to tell her somewhat about Geraldine, she heard him quietly, never looking up.

"You will like her, I am sure," he said at last.

"But why did you not write or tell me about her, before?"

"I was afraid of losing the only sister I had," he replied, frankly.

"There was no need to be afraid of that," she said, speaking calmly now. "You have told her about me?"

"Yes, and she likes you already."

"Then of course I shall like her. Tell her so, for me."

It was a rather sad leave-taking, later. Hope's face wore a soberer expression than he remembered ever to have seen upon it, and he saw the traces of tears. When he bent and kissed her, in brotherly fashion, he saw a look in her eyes that haunted him for months. And as he walked slowly homeward he felt a tumult of emotions in his breast that found no peace until far on into the night.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOPE'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

IF all those rare October days had been a memory, that dull, chill day of November, on which John journeyed back to Baylan, was a regret. What he regretted I cannot quite define. It was not now his lapse from temperance—that had somehow been shadowed over by the evening with Hope. It was not his love for and engagement to Geraldine Faythe—that he felt certain was right. It was not Hope's love for him, in itself—that, too, was sweet and pleasant to think upon. Perhaps, more than anything else, it was the fact that in ways he thought little of at the time, he had called out her love; that now she must suffer and grieve, and he be not strictly blameless.

All through the long day's ride he brooded over his vague, indefinite thoughts. It should have been a happy day to him: he was returning to a desirable winter's work, in a position few young men could secure; he was returning to love and sympathy of the tenderest and sweetest. He had done his duty by Hope, at last, and her friendship and sisterly interest were not forfeited. But still he was unhappy, though in such a very uncertain way that even he could not have explained it.

Not until the cars reached Unionville, and he realized that Baylan was but half an hour beyond, did he begin to feel like himself. As he was walking briskly up Province Street he met Hull Latimer.

"Just been to see if you had returned," said Hull. "A dozen of us are going up to the Observatory to-night, if the sky is clear, and we want you. Miss Faythe is over at our house."

He would rather have had Geraldine's society alone, this evening, John felt, but of course he would go, and thus he promised.

Two hours later he was on Murray Hill, at the Latimers'. Miss Faythe was looking more lovely than her wont, and her cordial greeting, added to the cordiality of all the rest, toned him up at once. A touch of Hull's wit was enough to sharpen his mental activities at any time, and to-night Hull was unusually keen. All the little company, in fact, were feeling at their best, and John soon forgot every bitter thought, every regretful memory, and lived but in the merry jest and repartee.

They did not go to the Observatory. The sky remained overcast all the evening, and there was every prospect of rain. So they enjoyed themselves as this little coterie well knew how to do, and separated at an early hour. John walked home with Geraldine, and told her something of his visit. He did not tell of it all. That supper of Fairchild's he chose not to recall, and that last evening with Hope—seemingly so far away now—he merely alluded to. In assuring Hope that he had told Geraldine of her, he had not spoken untruly. But he had spoken of Hope only as a dear good friend. That she might cherish toward him any other than simple friendly feeling he had not hinted.

He had thought, first, to tell Geraldine of his step into sin. He owed her thus much of frank confession, it seemed. Yet he shrank from it, and had squarely decided that, the deed being in the past, he would bury it and go on anew, more carefully and more worthily. He knew

well how Geraldine's pure nature abhorred impurity ; he feared she might unconsciously turn away, if only a little, and be less to him and his life. And now she was so much ! A sense of his weakness came over him, even as he walked by her side, such as he never before realized ; a new recognition of her womanly strength dawned upon him, as in a moment. He was glad, in a fuller gladness than he had experienced until now, that she would be henceforth a help to him, and a blessing.

He had not been accustomed to think of himself as weak. He had as much of self-conceit as usually characterizes very young manhood. But just now a truer measurement of self was suggested to his mind. It would not long last ; it was a temporary bit of insight that came, I know not how, exactly, and though sure to return, would not be permanent.

To Hope Hensell this evening was a dreary end to a long, dreary day. Was it a little thing that she had given her love, and it had been passed by, as of nothing worth ? So it may seem to you and I, who know that all romances have their endings, that no dreams endure. To her it was the one great fact of human experience. She had not passed such a restless night as some story-tellers would credit her with. She had shed some bitter tears, after John's departure ; she had read over again some of his letters, recalled once more many of his little tender-nesses — had sought some excuse for her love in his often manifest affection, and finding excuse sufficient had ended with a feeling of indignation in which she had sunk to sleep.

Good healthy bodies will conquer troubled hearts, as a rule. Hope was strong and well. It was not likely she would pine away because of misplaced love, and this fact comforted her mother when she saw, next day, with a

mother's quick intuition, that something had gone wrong between Hope and John. Healthy people never die of love.

But all day Hope had felt a loss. She missed something. No wonder the sky was dull and leaden, she thought. The world had gone wrong. And at evening, when Albert Burley called, she had hard work to be civil and agreeable. What did she care now for the matters he talked of? She would rather be alone. When he took his leave, as he soon did, rather chilled by her manner, she went to her room, and again read over John's letters — again shed some unavailing tears, and then, like a sensible girl as she was, resolutely put the past behind her, resolved to cherish no regrets, and fancied herself grown older by many years.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CONTEST FOR SENATOR.

Two months went rapidly by. The first week in January came, and the Legislature convened. Speaker Bremm returned to Baylan as senator, having been elected "by an overwhelming majority," as his party papers said — "a very manifest expression of the popular wish and will." They did not say that for weeks before election he had done nothing but manipulate men in his interest ; that he had gone up and down in his district, placing money in the hands of judicious friends to be judiciously expended in controlling votes ; that at every place where liquor was sold he had arranged for a liberal dispensation of "free drinks," to the same wholesome end ; that when election-day came, at every polling-place there was a miscellaneous buying of manhood, or what passes for it, by his loyal and zealous followers ; that he was really elected by "an overwhelming majority" of dollars and drinks.

No ; they said nothing of all this. But the organs of the defeated candidates said what meant about the same thing ; and they hinted that the Hon. Israel Bremm, having spent a small fortune to secure election, might possibly take the first opportunity to make a small fortune through his election. Which was a very wicked hint indeed, and made the Hon. Israel Bremm and his friends exceeding wroth.

The senator greeted his nephew warmly, and at once

volunteered to secure him an additional place as clerk of a committee ; it would add to his pay and perquisites, and he could readily do the little extra work. It would be well for him, too, to do correspondence for some daily paper, and this, the senator thought, could be readily arranged.

John became clerk to the Committee on Judiciary, of which his uncle was made a prominent member — high honor for one first taking the senatorial seat — and he also became correspondent for “The Metropolitan,” a tolerably well-known, but not largely circulating daily journal, published in Metropolisville, to which he was bound to write three letters each week. He had thus enough to do, his regular office labor being considerable, and it was fortunate that he had. He was less apt to run into dissipation than he might have been if idle much of the time.

That was a lively winter in Baylan. I remember that there were an unusual number of important measures brought before both houses — “jobs,” we were wont to call them who saw behind the scenes. The lobby was present in stronger force than in many years before ; there were factional fights, and fiery discussions without number, and half a dozen investigating committees, all of which served to keep up excitement, and make legislation more interesting than in its normal condition it ever is.

Socially, too, it was a brilliant season. A Baylan man, of high social and professional position, was Speaker, and he gave receptions liberally — being an aspirant for the governorship, it was said, and courting popularity. The Lieutenant-Governor was a temporary householder in Baylan, and he, too, was itching for promotion at the hands of the people, and he, too, gave stylish receptions. And the Governor — he held levees and receptions far

ahead of any ever previously inaugurated, because, forsooth, he was to be balloted for by and by, in joint session, for United States Senator, and he knew that the broadest way to friendly consideration and regard is through a man's stomach. What tables his Excellency did set, that winter ! And how more than ever kind and affable he was to all ! Whoever went to him, on whatever errand, went away strong in the faith that Governor Smoothe could not be excelled for gentlemanly courtesy, however he might lack in statesmanship.

Of course he won. It was a sharp race for the senatorial honors, but the Governor was an old politician, somewhat of the Israel Bremm type, and more experienced than he, and he laid his plans well. People said he spent money to succeed ; the opposition papers charged that votes were bought, right upon the Assembly floor, while the ballot was in progress, but it was certainly a cruel charge, and had no foundation in truth. These grave senators, and less grave assemblymen, might buy votes to secure their own election, but is it likely they would sell their own votes in the election of any other man or men ? They were too honorable, of course, to permit of such a thing.

Naturally enough, John was wrought into a fever of party enthusiasm, while the senatorial fight raged. The chief candidate was his friend, and he was proud of that friendship. He owed the Governor something, moreover, for position, and was willing, even anxious, to do for him whatever service he could. And for a young man, without a vote, he had done considerable, and was as elated when the result came as though he had done it all.

They made a night of it, down at the Leviathan House, after the contest ended — a night of hilarity and good-fellowship. The Governor's warmest partisans were all

there ; they filled the parlors, and overran the corridors, and thronged the bar. The Governor was a temperance man in his own person, as the term temperance goes among men of politics. That is to say, he never drank much himself. We have seen that he kept liquors in his house, and served them to his guests. So now, in his temporary parlors at the Leviathan, where he received a crowd of enthusiastic supporters, he dispensed freely of champagne, and seemed no wise disturbed that many injudicious friends too deeply drank his success.

John had refrained from drink, almost entirely, thus far. At receptions he had indulged little. In his daily association he had held wholly aloof. That supper of Fairchild's, with its results, came to his mind often, and brought always chagrin and remorse. He was very near to vowing, whenever he thought of it, that henceforth he would not taste intoxicating beverage again. If he had so vowed, then, he might have saved much of the bitter experiences which followed, and I might never have written what I have been writing, and what is still left for me to write.

But amid this excited throng at the Leviathan he was just a creature of the hour, as excited as any about him, and with no thought of yesterday or to-morrow. He drank with the rest. He cheered the Governor's little speech as boisterously as they. He drank again and again, for his blood was hot, and his brain giddy. With a dozen other young fellows, — correspondents, department clerks, etc., — he grew more and more jubilant, and when older heads had sensibly withdrawn, these remained, drinking now for the drink's sake it seemed, and heedless of nearly all the proprieties.

One or two staggered away in time to stagger homeward without assistance ; the others stayed until they

reeled into chairs sprawlingly, one by one, maundering unintelligibly, and sank into the heavy slumber of a debauchee. Of these latter was John, for whom Geraldine Faythe had hours before put up her nightly prayer, in whose nobleness and moral strength she fondly believed, for whose future she so often pictured grand and beautiful things. And while she slept the sleep of purity and trust, he whom she loved as her life lay there in his drunken unconsciousness, an object only for present loathing and disgust.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE GREAT UPGIVING.

WHEN John went slowly up Province Street, late next morning, he felt as if he had been convicted of a crime. Much of his debauch he had little recollection of, but the one fact that he had drank to excess, and had been again intoxicated, was enough. All day he was as a criminal in his own sight. His party friends were in high spirits over the victory just won; but he, for the time being, sickened of it. He could not do his work. He tried it, and found trying useless. Finally he went home, sought his room, flung himself morbidly upon his bed, and was soon asleep.

Miss Faythe expected a call from him that evening, but he did not come. For the very good reason that he never wakened until nearly ten o'clock. Then, having slept off some of his self-reproach, he went to the Capitol, found the Assembly busy with excited discussion upon the question of Excise in Metropolisville, and presently became so absorbed in a report of the debate for "The Metropolitan," that he forgot everything beside, and wrote rapidly until one o'clock, when the house adjourned.

By the day following, another feeling had grown up in his mind. Why thus reproach himself? it urged. He had done no great wrong. True, he had been a little too indulgent, but that was not a serious thing. Men must drink, at such times, and what if some did go beyond the

limit? He was very strict, as a rule. There were not many young men, in positions similar, whose habits were so regular as his. He must not be too strict with himself. A little lee-way now and then no sensible people could blame him for. Those who would condemn so rare lapses from sobriety as he had indulged were fanatical.

Such was about the substance of his thought. Even Geraldine would excuse him he was sure. Yet somehow he decided to say nothing to her of the matter, and he was glad that her acquaintance with the Capitol *attachés* was limited. There was no probability that she would hear of what transpired at the Leviathan unless he told her; and there was no need that he speak of it. She possibly might not realize just what the spirit of the occasion really was, and she might think he had less reason than he really had to overstep ordinary bounds.

So he kept silent with regard to it, and Geraldine held on blindly to her perfect faith in him. But he was not satisfied with himself. The reasoning he had sought comfort in was not so good as it ought to have been, and he knew it. For a whole week after, he was in a fever of unrest, and because so dissatisfied and troubled, he did daily what he daily sought additional excuse for doing — he drank. Not largely, but just to steady his nerves, and help him perform his work. He was not quite well, he believed; he needed some stimulant. His system required toning up. Which reasoning a physician indorsed, as physicians are very apt to do at times, and he could take his wine now with a good conscience.

The winter wore away. Hurry and excitement marked the closing days of the session. The poorly paid legislators worked night and day, as few men work elsewhere, and with the poor satisfaction of knowing that much they did was but half done. Such as were honest, and wanted

to serve well the people, came to feel a contempt for common legislative methods, and to doubt if, as a rule, legislation were not less a blessing than a curse. Such as lacked honesty, and were looking chiefly to self, found good opportunity to put money in their purse; and if they neglected so to do, they have been grossly libeled.

The Senate Judiciary Committee was overrun with business, and John found his clerkship thereof not a sinecure. He began to tire of all this confusion and haste — this continual besetment of men by men that he saw daily about him — this pulling hither and thither of diverse influences — this bartering of votes, and pledging of aid, and doing of doubtful things. It was such a life as a lively, vigorous temperament enjoys, for its liveliness and change, but such a life as is nevertheless damaging to a man's moral sense, and wearisome to stand out against in purity.

In the midst of legislative fret and flurry, almost as a rebuke to individual meanness and petty partisanship, there came one day a great shock. In the face of it men stood awed. As in mute protest, party leaders who had fought bitter battles, in the Senate and in the House, shook each other's hands. Men who had known but one word of political significance, and with whom that word was Party, learned a new one of Patriotism, and the new word — new with a meaning none had felt until then — was Union.

Sumter had been fired upon. From that little low-lying fortress in Charleston harbor, a thrill of pain had gone out all over our broad land. How it chilled us, shall we ever forget? In Baylan there was nervous excitement such as you would nowhere see outside a State capital, or the national capital itself. The legislature did its work amid more of feverish tumult than ever before. Crowds

besieged it, drawn there, many of them, by the vaguest reasons. And when came the President's call for seventy-five thousand men, the old Capitol knew more activity and unrest than it had seen in a generation.

Thenceforward, until the legislature adjourned, and on through the late spring and early summer, there was no lack of mental stimulus. Our whole country was in a fever. Wherever men held executive power, there the fever centered. At every governmental head-quarters there was constant stir and bustle. Men lived months in a day, or so it seemed. Those of us who were at Baylan then, cannot even recall the time without a quickening of the pulse, and a flushing of the cheek.

When Congress authorized the levying a large army, as it did in midsummer, one of the first to respond to the call, and to proceed promptly in the organizing of a regiment, was Senator Bremm. He had personal popularity, the prestige of political success, the enthusiasm of a man in his early prime, and as much of genuine patriotism as the average. In twenty days he had his regiment up to the maximum; in a week more it was *en route* for the front. Arrived there, he wrote to John.

"Give up your place," he said, "and come to me. I am to command a brigade, and you shall go on my staff. This business is not to be finished in a day, and it will pay you to come. You can get an engagement as correspondent of one of the large dailies, which will be much to your advantage, and will have plenty of time for the work, as your duties as my aid will be only nominal."

Did Israel Bremm thus early see of what service to any commander, desirous of making reputation, a keen newspaper correspondent might be? Perhaps. He was farsighted, and he never failed to think of himself, in whatever he did.

John had become so restless, amid all the feverish surroundings of the past few months, that he was ready for anything which promised excitement and success. His uncle's offer suited his mental condition. He had begun to tire of the office routine, and a change from indoor clerical life to the life of a camp struck his fancy, as it struck the fancy of so many young men ; then, too, he was aglow with love for the old flag. To cast his lot with it, and follow its fortune, had in it romance and glory.

So he wrote his uncle to secure the commission, resigned his clerkship, his resignation to take effect at the end of the month, and that evening visited Miss Faythe to bear the news of his important decision.

Those were days of unselfish upgiving. Mothers, wives, and sweethearts yielded their own, as if to the sacrament. Sad days they were, because of the partings and the pain. Yet they were noble days. The hearts of men ran over. Party bickerings faded out. Little differences melted away in presence of that one great difference which divided the land. As in a day, men had been born into new brotherly love and impulse. They gave of their time, their treasure, and their tears. They gave with a liberality never before known. To give was no longer a sacrifice, but a sublime duty, almost a great joy.

Miss Faythe was not really surprised when John told his purpose. She had seen, these many weeks, what might come. In the solitude of her prayers, she had thought of it, and anxiously. Over and over she had asked of God that John might be led to do what was right, even if the doing cost her trial and grieving. To-night when he came, she felt the test-hour at hand. Even before he spoke, some subtle intuition prefaced every word.

“What if I were to leave Baylan ?” he asked.

She looked at him curiously, questioningly, certain of his meaning, and yet playing at uncertainties with herself.

"You know Uncle Israel is at the front?"

"Yes."

"He wants me to join him. I have written him that I will. Have I done right?"

"I suppose so."

She did not like to seem certain. Indeed, at this moment she scarcely felt certain as to what might be right or might be wrong. The only certainty in her mind was a great doubt.

"When must you go?" she asked.

"In a fortnight. I must go home first."

"What will your mother say?"

He had not specially thought of his mother until now.

"She will worry some, probably," he said. "She would anyhow, so it does n't so much matter."

"But you are all she has to depend on. What if you should not come back?"

As she said this, Geraldine's eyes filled. What if he should not come back — to her! He saw the feeling she tried to hide, and answered by both word and caress.

"Oh, I shall come back. I am not going as a common soldier, you know. I shall be in no danger. It will be more a play-spell for me, than anything else. My chief work will be as a correspondent."

And then he told her just what his uncle had written, and they talked long about the matter. She did not discourage him. On the contrary, she spoke quite as hopefully as he, for she saw that his desire was strong, and his purpose not easy to be changed, even did she wish to change it. But there was one point she felt impelled to speak plainly upon.

"I fear as much for yourself, as for your body," she said, finally. "Army life must be full of temptation."

"And is not life anywhere?" he responded. "There cannot well be worse temptation for a man than I have met here in Baylan."

"But here you have good influences to counteract the bad. I am afraid you will miss these, there."

"There are as many good men at the front as stay at home. My associations will be altogether with the officers, and they are generally men of character and standing."

And thus he parried her doubts, one by one, pleased by her solicitude, and rather amused than otherwise by her anxious expression.

"You will come often, the little time there is left?" she asked, when he took leave.

"Yes. In a week I must go to Liscomb, to say my good-byes. Until then you shall see me every evening, and when I return there will be two or three days more before my final departure."

So every evening John visited her; every evening she met him with a smiling face, and talked in her earnest, hopeful, almost childishly frank way; every evening she gave him his good-night kiss as cheerfully as though they were thus to meet and part daily forever; and every evening she went to her room almost as heavy-hearted and sad as though this parting had been the final one, and wept bitter tears until weeping lost itself in prayer, and in prayer she dropped asleep.

Mrs. Bremm was prepared for John's good-by, by a letter he wrote, but still she was as Rachel, and refused to be comforted. It was very unfeeling of him to go off into the army and get killed when she had only him left. The Lord would remember it of him. If he owed a duty

anywhere, it was to her. So she talked, much of the day or two he was at home. But while she talked, she worked diligently, fixing up the many little needfuls he would now want with him, and when he was ready to go she had begun to feel a sort of motherly pride in this boy who stood ready to go forth in their country's behalf.

John found the good-byes more sober than he had thought, when he left Liscomb. Poor Hope! She fell on his shoulder at the last, and sobbed her very heart out. Her mother cried as though John were indeed her son, and were going away forever. Mrs. Bremm clung to him as tenderly as though no unpleasant word had ever escaped her lips. Burley put an arm around him in his quiet, affectionate way, and only said "Be good to yourself, John." More people than he remembered ever to have known in the little village, crowded about him at the stage, and wished him well with a warm hand-clasp.

At Baylan John was given his lieutenant's commission by the Governor himself. "You are commissioned in Colonel Bremm's regiment," he said, "and will be assigned to duty on his staff as soon as his brigade is made up, and he takes command. You will have a pleasant place, as army places go."

John donned his uniform, and felt like another creature. Of course he wore it on one of his last calls upon Geraldine, that she might see him as a soldier. They went over to the Latimers' that evening, and there he said farewells to several of the coterie, who had come in. Next night was the last with Geraldine, and the saddest good-bye yet. She was cheerful and hopeful nearly the whole evening, but at the very last she broke down utterly, and sobbed upon his breast like a grieved child. When he tore himself away she was sobbing still, and his own cheeks were wet with tears not all her own.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AT THE FRONT.

Two weeks later, John wrote the following letter to Miss Faythe:—

IN CAMP NEAR ALEXANDRIA, }
August —, 1861. }

DEAR HEART, — Are the days long to you? Here they are surprisingly short. There is such a tumult and fever all the while. I don't know hardly what I do, but it seems as if I never was busy before. Since Uncle Israel came into command of his brigade a few days ago, as I wrote you, my duties have been greatly multiplied. Perhaps it will be different after a little, when we get fully organized, but so far I am persuaded that those who think army life a lazy life are vastly mistaken. It is exciting, and taxing, to the last degree. Just now we are getting ourselves into fighting trim, and a splendid army we shall be by and by. McClellan is a fine organizer, and the men all idolize him. You should see the *furore* he creates whenever he appears. He is another Napoleon, and will do grand things for the country when he gets his army well in hand.

Uncle Israel takes to this army business as though born to it. He will wear two stars yet, in place of one, if he does n't get prematurely knocked over. Now please don't go to thinking officers are much exposed, because I dropped that remark, for you see, darling, they are not. I have already learned enough of the art of war to know that a good field officer keeps in the rear of his command, and I propose to be a very good officer — in this respect.

As aid on a general's staff I have many privileges, and

though so busy, I cannot very well complain. I run over to Washington almost daily, and it is curious to see the crowds there. What a hive the place is ! It seems to be swarming continually. The hangers-on at the various departments make up an army almost as large as this which General McClellan is bringing into shape and discipline. I saw the President yesterday — a great ungainly man, with a plain face so sad in its expression it would sadden you. He was passing along the street alone. They tell odd stories of him, and I know many think he is too undignified for the position he holds, and that he has no proper conception of the responsibility resting upon him ; but it must be these never saw him as I saw him, with that anxious, troubled look. If I had never seen his picture, or known a description of him, I should have pitied him, as one carrying a burden.

I can not realize yet that in all this busy din, and whirl, and show, we are not playing at war. I know that just over in the village yonder brave young Ellsworth was shot, and I remember Big Bethel, and Bull Run. But that is all. That these gay trappings about me, which look so beautiful and brilliant, are meant for serious uses, I can scarcely believe. Our brigade is made up of five regiments — full and well officered. They are all our own State men, and noble fellows. One of the noblest is Captain Silvers, of the staff, whom you would like, I am sure. He is a graduate of Yale, and a fine scholar. It was he who wrote that pretty little poem in last month's "Pacific Monthly," which we admired so much. I accidentally found it out, and then I told him of reading the poem to a friend, and how she was touched by it. "I would like to see your friend who is so sympathetic," said he, and then I showed him your picture. "A good face," he remarked, as he gave the picture back. You have so many compliments that you will not mind the comparative poverty of this one, will you ?

"A good face !" He does not know how good ; he never can. And the heart under it — that is so far better I grow more and more conscious how unworthy I am of it. Love me, darling, and so hold me close to purity and truth. I have

already found that life here is not quite life at home, and that a man can easily go astray. Perhaps, if I had not your love, I might be in peril. As it is, I have no fear. You do love me ! You must. Such love as mine would compel your love, in return. In this belief I trust, and in this trust I am

Always yours,

JOHN.

Month after month went by. Our proud army, encamped around Washington, drilled and waited and waited and drilled. The country looked on expectantly, while that black cloud of Disunion grew blacker and more portentous. Mail routes were burdened with letters from those at home to those in the tents, from those in the tents to those at home. Newspaper correspondents had little to write of except the incidents of camp life, the rumors of an advance, or the political and military gossip which were always abundant. It was, in fact, a tiresome autumn, and a most thoroughly unsatisfactory winter. The army liked such inaction as little as did the country.

Geraldine wrote often to John — long chatty letters, which did much to relieve the dull routine of the days. She wrote as she talked, with an easy pleasantness, which charmed. And she was earnest as well as gossipy. In unobtrusive ways she said much that helped him. So quietly that he scarcely noticed it, she held him not a little in an atmosphere of her own faith and feeling. Yet she did not often speak plainly of her one great wish — that he would learn to love the Saviour she so fully trusted. She feared to weary him of religious thought ; and so her main desire spent itself in prayer.

Hope, too, wrote frequently, calling him her soldier-brother, and telling everything of interest pertaining to Liscomb and the people there. Burley also sent numerous letters, and John saw that his old friend was growing into a strong, earnest young manhood, content with

quieter walks than he would have felt satisfied in, but always true and sincere. Burley was still a tutor in the academy, and still made his home with Mrs. Bremm.

Those weary years of war! I have no wish to sadden my story with their details. Neither could I write as intelligently of them as of some other things, did I so wish. Of active service I saw nothing. While Bremm was at the front, writing his brilliant letters for print, and sharing in the glory of our dear old flag, I patiently worked on in Baylan. It is true that my work had always to do with the army, or with such part of it as our State sent out, and that I was in constant intercourse with army officers, and so felt a closeness of sympathy with military affairs which the mass could not feel. It is true that John wrote me often, and that I watched his course with more than my former interest in him. But of much of his life I was ignorant—his every-day being and doing, I mean. I know that he chafed under the dullness and discipline of the camp; I am as confident that what so many indulged in to relieve these, he did not wholly shun. He was naturally no worse in his tendencies than the average—perhaps rather better, but he had lively spirits, warm social disposition, active impulses; and he lacked that strong principle, stayed up and made stronger by abiding Christian faith, which alone can hold a man pure and unsullied amid impurity and sin.

When McClellan moved in his campaign upon the Peninsula, General Bremm's command found out what war really was. Along the banks of the Chickahominy, they met suffering, disease and death. They fought rebels, not alone, but the malaria of the swamps. There was not merely the hard fare of life in the field, but of constant and extreme exposure. They were in peril more

perilous than that of the sword. No wonder they sickened and died, so many of them. No wonder they rejoiced at every opportunity to give battle. Was it not better to die bravely by the bullet, than to waste slowly away with disease?

In one of his letters to Geraldine, just after the campaign commenced, John said: "I begin to see what war means. It is not a pleasant thing, darling. It hurts sorely, wherever it touches. It is terribly sad. But I shall come through all right, I feel certain. I first saw fighting yesterday, and it seems likely I shall see enough of it for days to come. Our troops fought splendidly. Silvers does n't know what fear is. He goes anywhere, with a perfect recklessness. I try to be careful of myself, for your sake."

To me he said, about the same date: "It is a bad business. Our poor fellows are sacrificed in every way. If you never hear from me again, old fellow, do not think it strange. I may go as so many are going, within a week. I have told you about Silvers? If he does n't get winged in the next fight, it will be almost a miracle. He is the veriest dare-devil ever I saw."

The battle of Fair Oaks was begun on the last day of May, and ended June 1st, and a terrible struggle it was. For nearly a month afterward the Federal forces lay along the sluggish Chickahominy, patiently besieging Richmond, which was but a few miles away. Then came that week of disastrous struggling, in which McClellan sought to change his base of supplies, and fought sanguinary battles each day of his retreat. An awful week it was, as we all remember. Day after day the papers were full of dispatches, telling how our men were fighting nobly, grandly and gloriously, yet were continually falling back. Day after day we were in a fever of expectancy,

fearful of the worst. The eyes of the whole country were turned to that wretched region of the Chickahominy swamps, where men fought as if there and then was to be decided the final fate of their own.

General Bremm's brigade was one of those which suffered most. Every regiment in it was sadly cut up. The field officers dwindled down to a fourth of their original number, and there were hardly enough properly to command the handful of men left for action. Through it all, though, the general and his staff escaped harm. It was wonderful that they did go through engagement on engagement thus safely, for General Bremm was invariably with his men where battle raged hottest, and each one of the staff took pride in emulating his example. It seemed as if they all courted danger. In more than one report they were handsomely mentioned for gallantry, and very deservedly mentioned, too.

One of the last days of that sickening struggle came. It found officers and men worn out with fighting and fatigue. They had not slept; scarcely had they eaten. They were well-nigh completely broken down. The air was thick with cannon-smoke, and almost stifling. The summer sun burned fiercer than ever upon all.

John felt an indefinable sense of danger, as the engagement opened. For a little time it oppressed and troubled him.

"Silvers," he said, speaking to his comrade, "I am going to be hit, to-day."

Silvers looked at him, doubtfully.

"Do you believe in presentiments then?" he asked.

"I don't know much about them, as a general thing," John answered. "But something tells me my turn is near."

"I've been feeling that way myself, all the morning," rejoined Silvers.

"About me?"

"No; about myself. But I felt just so the first battle we were in, and nothing came of it. I guess we'll pull through now."

"If I don't — if I am unlucky" —

John hesitated.

"Well — any message?"

"I'd like you to write Miss Faythe for me. She'll want to know."

As John said this, his uncle rode up with a message, and a moment later they were all again facing death. It was one of the wildest, terriblest days of all the seven. Men were mowed down like worthless grain. They charged, and fled, and charged again. Despite fatigue, and a scorching heat, and the constant bringing up by the enemy of fresh troops, they fought as men seldom fought before. The valor that one day witnessed was enough for a whole nation's history. Throughout the long, varying hours, General Bremm held his shattered regiments bravely in hand, never yielding position except as ordered, and for them and himself winning glory. In this his active aids had full share.

It was not until toward night-fall that either general or staff was hit. The first to suffer was General Bremm. He was leading the remnant of his brigade across an open field, to support the right which was in danger of being hurled back upon the centre disastrously. A ball struck him in the side, inflicting an ugly flesh wound, and unsaddling him at once. Silvers and John rushed to his aid.

"Never mind me, boys," he said. "Go with the men."

But they helped him to the foot of a tree near by, and would care for him, even against his protest. As they and others gathered round him, a shell from a Confeder-

ate battery came hurtling over the group, and exploded just beyond. The group scattered as they heard its shriek, but too late. A piece of the shell struck John in the thigh, and prostrated him. Another piece knocked Silvers senseless, and when he came to his senses again, as he did soon after dark, he could see nothing of the general or of John. Rousing up, he found that the tide of battle had somehow changed, and that here about him there were only the dying and the dead. In the dim twilight every object was magnified to twice its usual size, and a ghostly company it was that he saw round about. Here, a gun caisson lay, half wrecked ; there, a horse and his rider had fallen, never to rise again ; on either hand were stiff, gory corpses, their weapons clasped tightly in their grasp, some in the attitude of prayer, as if they died piously, others with scowls upon their faces, as if breathing hatred and defiance to the last.

Staggering slowly to his feet, Silvers discovered a form near, that he fancied might be John. He tried to raise it to a sitting position, but had not strength. In the dimness he but dimly saw the face, and besides, he was yet partially dazed by the blow that had laid him senseless a while before.

"It's Bremm, sure enough," he said. "Poor fellow!" and the tears fell.

Off on the left he heard the movements of troops, and turning sadly, he slowly picked his way in that direction. Every step cost him a pang. He grew sicker and sicker at heart, each instant. "O God!" he said at last, in very agony, "how long must this wicked work go on?"

Ten minutes later he was with our troops, where they had established their lines for the night, and was making diligent inquiries for General Bremm. He found him, finally, in a hospital tent. He had been brought off the

field by his men, and though weak from loss of blood, was likely to recover.

"A hard day for us Silvers," said the general. "Were you hit, too?"

"Only a scalp wound, that stunned me for a while. But John" —

He stopped, unable to go on.

"Where is he?" the general asked.

"Dead on the field, poor fellow!"

"Are you sure?"

"I left him only an hour ago. That ugly shell did the business."

"Poor boy!" the general sighed. "He fought well, and was sure of promotion, as you are. Could not the body be brought in?"

"I will see," and Captain Silvers went on his painful errand.

Three days later he wrote the following letter: —

HARRISON'S LANDING, *July 3, 1862.*

MISS GERALDINE FAYTHE, — I have sad news to communicate. Our dear friend John Bremm has met the fate of the battle-field, after going unharmed through many fights. If he were seriously wounded it would be less painful for me to write of it, but the case is worse than that. He was killed by the bursting of a shell, which also injured several others. I was knocked senseless, and when I came to I found him near by, dead. An hour later I went back for his body, to bring it within the lines, but though we searched a long time we could not find it. I suppose we missed the place, as the rebels fired upon us constantly if we showed a light, and we could not search carefully and thoroughly. It can hardly be possible that he was also knocked insensible, as I was, and had recovered and made his way from the spot before we reached it. I wish it were, for I would like to give you a little hope if I could.

Lieutenant Bremm was a good soldier, and a man of the finest and most companionable nature. I loved him, and as I write this I cannot repress the tears which will start at the memory of his many rare qualities, and the thought that I shall never see him more. He was robed in glory before he died, and with hundreds of other noble fellows earned a glorious fame.

I am very sincerely yours,

JEROME B. SILVERS.

Among the published list of badly wounded, which the whole country read about the same date, appeared the names of General Israel Bremm and Captain J. B. Silvers ; and the long array of missing included Lieutenant John Bremm.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

“MISSING.”

How closely Geraldine Faythe watched the newspapers, through those eventful days, many of you will realize more perfectly than I can tell. There were columns on columns of telegraphic dispatches from the front, in almost every issue. They teemed with sad stories of disaster and death. They told of victory, often, but they gave, also, its terrible cost. Geraldine read them always with a shudder, and an after prayer for John. He was in peril daily, she knew, lightly as he wrote her concerning it; she feared the worst continually. Nothing but full trust in God kept her cheerful and hopeful, I had almost said happy.

It was a dreadful strain upon us all, while those Peninsular movements were going on. Not until we read that McClellan's whole army was safely resting upon the James, after that heroic contest at Malvern Hills, did we breathe freely once more. His whole army, did I say? If it only had been thus! But along the Chickahominy's fatal banks, and through its death-breathing swamps, were strewn hundreds who would never rally to the ranks again—hundreds whose lives had reached out widely to the tender touching of other lives; whose death was briefest pain for them, but pain slow and enduring for thousands of the living—brave men and true,

“Who sudden rank in glory won
Because they fought so well!”

Thousands more were wounded and sick, and were left behind to fall into an enemy's hands, and drag out months of wretchedness inside prison walls, or waste slowly away in some obscure spot on the field where they fell, dying by inches of hunger and neglect. Of this latter number, mainly, were the "missing."

When Miss Faythe read John's name in the "missing" list, as she did before Captain Silvers' letter came, she did not faint, or cry out, or in any marked way manifest the sudden grief which smote her. She sat in a state of half suspense, seeing nothing of the cruel letters which spelled so cruel a blow, but frightened and benumbed. Her rather thin, clean-cut lips pressed close together, as of their own will keeping back expression, and smothering the hurt.

I had taken her the paper which contained the list — one of the great dailies of Metropolisville, which I thought she would not be likely to see. She had scanned the line of names partly through, with no word from me except a hint that it might interest her. When she spoke, it was very quietly.

"Are missing men often heard from?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," I answered.

"What becomes of them, generally?"

"Sometimes they are taken prisoners, and not properly reported? generally they are" —

I stopped, involuntarily, for she was looking at me with such an anxious look in those marvelous eyes of hers as I shall never forget. She finished the sentence for me interrogatively —

"Killed?"

"Yes."

"And do you think it likely our friend Mr. Bremm is a prisoner?" she asked after a moment's silence.

"He may be. We may certainly hope that he is. He has been very fortunate thus far ; I have a feeling that he will come out all right now."

"I think he will," she said, and the anxious look had given way to one of trust.

A week later I called upon her again. I had hoped to bear some definite news to her ; it had not occurred to me that she might have heard anything from John direct. To my thinking Bremm was either killed or a prisoner ; but which ?

She met me, as she always met her friends, with a cheerful cordiality, but I saw evidences of suffering in her face, and wished at once that I had kept away. She might think I had come with good news, I fancied, and be only disappointed. I spoke without delay.

"We get no word from Lieutenant Bremm," said I, at the Capitol. He must have been taken prisoner, singly, and may not be heard from in a long time."

"I have heard from him." She spoke hesitatingly, but without showing emotion. "You know the relations which existed between Mr. Bremm and myself — you may read this ;" and she handed me the letter of Captain Silvers.

As I read it, my own eyes filled.

"When did it come ?" I asked, my voice, a trifle unsteady, perhaps, for I, too, liked John.

"Two or three days ago." She spoke a little weariedly now, as if the time had been longer than her answer signified.

I could not speak again. I knew not what to say. If she had been his wife, I might have found some word of comfort.

"Do you believe he is dead ?" she asked, presently. The question was abrupt and searching, but I answered it truthfully.

"It seems there can be no doubt about it."

"Yet I have a doubt, somehow," she said. "He may have come to his senses, after Captain Silvers left him there for dead, as the letter hints, and I cannot help believing that he did."

For myself, I had no such hope; neither had I any wish to destroy hers.

"You know we have talked of answers to prayer," she went on to say. "I think this feeling I have comes as an answer. I have prayed about Mr. Bremm," — she spoke low and with her peculiar earnestness, — "and I have felt a sort of certainty about him."

"Did not this letter shake your faith a little?" I asked.

"Yes, a little, at the first. By and by I began to think God might have permitted the letter just to test my faith, and now I really believe that was so. We shall hear from our friend; I am as positive of it as I am that you sit there."

And I went my way, wishing I might rest always in so complete a trust as blessed and beautified this girl's life.

The first news they received at Liscomb, concerning John, was in shape of a brief letter from General Bremm to the young man's mother, telling the same sad story which had been told to Geraldine Faythe. Unlike the letter of Silvers, however, it gave no hint of possible escape, and therefore it came upon Mrs. Bremm as an absolute, awful fact.

Burley was not near when the letter was put into her hand, and so she went straight to Mr. Hensell's.

"I knew it would be so!" she declared, breaking abruptly in upon Mrs. Hensell and Hope. "I expected it!" and she fell to weeping bitterly.

"What is it?" inquired her mother. "Is it John?"

"Yes — he's — killed" — said Mrs. Bremm, speaking

between hysterical sobs. "I — knew — it would — be so. And — he was — all — I had."

Hope felt a sharp, sudden pain at her heart, and for an instant everything swam before her sight. Was he not all *she* had, too? came the question, in her quick agony.

"What have you heard?" she asked, a moment later.

Mrs. Bremm gave her the general's letter, which she read slowly as she might have read a warrant of death. Then Mrs. Hensell also perused it, and afterward essayed a bit of comfort to the stricken mother, whose grief now had overrun her habit of complaint, and made her, for once, voiceless. And while the two women sat there together — the one in a passion of sorrow which whelmed her completely, and the other weeping alike for sympathy and regret — Hope slipped quietly off to the solitude of her room, where she gave herself up to grieving that she felt to be sacred.

In the days which followed, Hope rather cherished her grief, than sought to put it one side. It seemed to her somehow, that in thus lamenting her friend she was more loyal to herself than she had of late been. She had resolutely fought against the old regard for him, and had fancied such effort in a degree successful. Living, he belonged to another, and she had no right to think of him tenderly. Dead, he was no more another's than hers, and she could think of him as tenderly as ever she had done, and without sense of wrong. So she robed him for his burial in a vestment of love, and wet it with her tears; and in his death to her he was resurrected into a newness of life for her like that which memory has so often kept fresh and green until the very end.

CHAPTER XXXV

A NIGHT IN AN AMBULANCE.

It was an ugly wound that John had received, and it let the blood out freely, at first, — so freely that he fainted, and lay some time unconscious. He recovered consciousness, however, before Captain Silvers did, and looked for his commander, whom he could not find. Not knowing Silvers had been likewise hit, he made no further search, but essayed to drag himself back within the lines. It was slow, painful work. His wound began to bleed afresh, and with each step he felt his little remaining strength ebbing away.

Must he lie down again and die? Not far to the right he heard the stir of a camp. Could he reach it? He thought of Geraldine, and nerved himself to effort. Slowly, and still more slowly, he plodded on. All the ground had been fought over, and was torn up by shot and shell, and the repeated evolutions of troops. Every thrust of his right foot against an obstacle made him cry out or moan. Many a time he stumbled and fell, and each fall cost him the agony of death.

Still he plodded on. Over and over again he was tempted to sink down and let the end come, soon as it would. But with each temptation came a renewal of will. He would not yield.

It seemed the longest, weariest time. It would have

been longer, wearier yet, if one of the picket guard had not seen him, dragging slowly along, and gone to his relief. Perhaps he would have failed, even at the very last, but for this. The friendly soldier helped him to a bit of wall close by, and gave him his canteen.

"You were hard hit, lieutenant," said the man.

"Yes. A piece of shell struck me here," and he pointed to the wound.

"Have you lost your regiment?"

"I am one of General Bremm's aids. The general was wounded, and then that brutish shell came for us all. I don't know what became of the rest. What can I do, now? I can't travel any farther," and he moaned again with the pain.

"There is an ambulance coming down the road yonder," said the man. "Perhaps you can get into that."

The road passed near where they were, and as the army wagon arrived opposite, the driver was challenged, and stopped.

"Where are you going?" asked the guard, after the formal salutations.

"To the James," the driver answered, with the Irish accent predominant. "An' a divil uv a march we're to have uv it, shure. Sivinteen mile if it's a fut, an' the corderoy 'll make it twinty-five. In the night, too, by the Holy Mary! Doan't ye keep me here; there's the intoire ambullance corpus behint me."

"But can't you take in a staff officer?" the guard questioned, as the driver began urging up his mules. "He's badly wounded, and can't be left here."

"An' is it hurted he is?" the sympathetic son of Erin inquired. "Nary a bit will I drive an impty ambullance away from the inemy when I can pick up sich a passenger as that, ye know. Show me the b'y."

Lieutenant Bremm had come forward, as they talked.

"Here 's to ye, colonel," said the teamster. "An' bad luck to the wans that shot ye! Aisy now!" and he took hold of him with a rough sort of tenderness. "'T won't be the purtiest roide iver ye tuk, but mebbe it be better than bein' starved, like, by the ribbuls."

They helped John in — not without hurting him sorely — and the wagon rolled lumberingly on. For a little time he was almost insensible, so great had been the tax upon his nervous and physical system. It was, indeed, a mercy that gave him this hour or two of semi-unconsciousness. He had suffered already so much and so long, and there was still so much to be suffered and endured.

By and by, as full consciousness returned once more, the pain of his wound increased. The road was one of the worst in the whole Peninsula, and its roughness seemed growing rougher every mile. How long the hours were! Would they never reach the end? He was tossed up and down remorselessly. At every turn or motion of his body the quick, darting pains cut him like a knife. Often his torture was so great that he screamed out frantically, while the tears ran freely down his face.

Thus hours went by. The teamster never ceased to urge his team on. The road was narrow, and shut in on either side by forest growth; there was scarcely room for one wagon to pass another. Back of this particular wagon was a long line of ambulances. Some were empty; some had sick and wounded in them; some were laden with stores. The way was dark; the animals were nearly worn out; the teamsters, many of them, were horribly profane. The moans of the sick, the occasional cries of the wounded, the cracking of whips, the oaths of the drivers, the creak and clamor of wheels — all this made up something akin to Pandemonium. All this burned into John's very brain,

with the burning fever which came upon him, and would never be effaced.

With the burning fever came also burning thirst. Every moan he gave was an inward cry for drink.

"For the love of God, comrade," he said once, when the wagon mired in a sink-hole, and suddenly stopped, "give me some water!"

The teamster produced his canteen, and John drained it at a draught.

Still they crept along. They had been a whole night on the way already, it seemed. Would morning never come? Rougher and rougher the corduroy, to John's sensitiveness. Each breath was a moan. The thirst came on again, like a consuming fire. It burned through all his veins; it leaped to his brain, and set him wild with delirium. Now he laughed, in mad, mocking laughter, that rose above the creak of wheels and the cracking of whips, and chilled many a poor fellow's heart; now he prayed—prayed for water, for life, for death; now he cursed—madly, wickedly, blasphemously, staining his lips with words that had never stained them before; now he cried to Geraldine, in tones that might have made good angels weep.

And still they crept on. Oh, the weary, wretched night, long almost as the eternities! You, who hold no such an one in memory, should be very glad.

God was good to the young man, at last. In place of fitful delirium He gave utter unconsciousness.

"Poor b'y!" said the teamster. "It's clane gone he is, intoirely, an' niver a bit o' good will the roide do 'im at all."

Dawn was just streaking the east, when the first of that long line of ambulances reached its destination, on the bank of the James. It was broad daylight when the wagon with its one occupant came to a final stand.

“What have you here?” asked an officer, looking in.
“I thought you came empty?”

“Shure an’ it’s a poor officer I picked up by the way, an’ it’s dead he is, sur, I’m thinkin’. Wud yes jist luk at ’im, sur, an’ see? It’s hurted he was, by the hathenish ribbuls.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE VILLAGE HERO.

It was a full month later that the following letter came to Geraldine : —

ON THE JAMES, *August 2, 1862.*

MISS GERALDINE FAYTHE :

I have good news to communicate. Lieutenant Bremm is living, and bids fair to recover. I have just found him here, in hospital quarters. He was badly wounded, but was able to leave the field, and must have gone before I searched for him. A clever teamster brought him through to this point, on the night of our retreat, and he was at once placed in hospital. He has been very near to death all the time since, being unconscious and delirious up to yesterday, when I chanced to find him. He is improving now, his wound is doing well, and he seems in fair spirits. He sends his love, and will write when he gets sufficiently strong. Meantime I will keep you advised of his condition.

Very sincerely, etc.,

JEROME B. SILVERS.

Miss Faythe showed me the letter when next I called on her.

“It is one of my answers,” she said ; and I understood what she meant.

Silvers wrote two or three letters more before John could pen anything, and Geraldine came to feel quite acquainted with him, and wrote him little thankful notes, under cover of her long epistles to John, which made him rather envy the invalid.

In August John was transferred to a hospital near Washington, and thence he wrote to us all. There he rapidly recovered strength, but his wound was of such a nature that full convalescence must be slow, and a matter of time. It was late in the fall, in fact, when he was able once more to resume his place upon General Bremm's staff.

That officer, meanwhile, had been promoted to a major-generalship, and was in command of a division. Silvers wore the major's gold leaf on his shoulder-straps, and was the general's chief adjutant. John ranked as captain, and was likely to rise much higher. He came home on a brief furlough, the next winter. A fine-looking fellow he was truly, in his soldier's dress. I should have been thoroughly proud of him, as a friend, if he had not accepted and returned so many invitations to drink. At the Capitol, during a legislative session, one was constantly beset with these, and few young men regularly resisted them.

John went to Liscomb, after a day or two in Baylan, and tarried briefly. It was a hard trial for Hope. The month in which he had been dead to his family and friends, he had been more completely alive to her than for a long time before. Very tenderly, very lovingly had she thought of him. All he had been to her in the earlier days of her affection he had been again in sweet renewal. When came the news of his escape, she was in a conflict of feeling such as few, perhaps, have experienced. That he still lived, she was sincerely glad. That she had wronged herself in so warmly remembering him, she knew, and regretted. Now that she must meet him, and did meet him, she was "in a strait betwixt two"—her joy and her regret.

John never could know what an effort it cost her to

receive his calls, to be with him as heretofore, to talk with him in the free, frank, sisterly way he liked so well. But Hope was strong : she could bear much, and she did. She was unselfish ; she could give largely and not feel it a sacrifice. So she gave of company and sympathy, and John accepted all, glad that she felt for him only a sister's regard, as he believed, and happy in her manifest pleasure at his return.

The young officer was a good deal of a hero, in the little village. Why not ? He had been honorably mentioned more than once, for gallant conduct in battle ; he had been left for dead upon the field ; his obituary had been printed in "The Telescope," in such terms as would satisfy almost any man who looked for satisfaction in that way. He had written brilliant letters from the front, which had been praised by editors and enjoyed by the people. He was in a desirable position on the staff of a popular general, and was surely a rising young man.

Nearly all of John's friends praised and petted him, and it was well that he had a good stock of common-sense, else so much of flattery would have ruined him for useful work. Even his mother was partly reconciled to his going away, and scolded less about it than he supposed she would. It was not so hard for him to go again as at first. It was not the first time. The newness of such an experience had passed by. In some degree, at least, he had become hardened to pain, and the pain of parting was not so keen. He had been close to death, and was yet with the living. He knew that in the very next fight, perhaps, he might fall, but had become rather indifferent to the knowledge. To men who daily face it, danger is not what it is to the novice.

The hardest task was taking leave of Geraldine once more. She was very human, with all her great trust in

God. She had the strongest human love. She poured it all out upon John. In her sight he stood next to Him unto whom she prayed. If she feared for him, as she so often did, she yet believed in him. She respected him. She looked up to him. His talents, his gifts, his nobleness, she magnified and was proud of. She believed he would win fame and honor; and yet she could not bear to give him up again. The letting him go was like letting go of life itself.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ON THE STUMP.

THOSE sober years of war went by. They seem brief now, in the retrospect ; they were long enough then. Long enough to rob many a home of its joy, many a life of its hope, many a form of its vigor and beauty. Long enough to make reputations and lose them, to crown men with popular homage and then trample them in the dust. Long enough to waste blood like water, to spend treasure untold, to weary the hearts of all.

Before the end came Major Silvers had won his star as a brigadier-general, and Captain John Bremm wore the colonel's eagle. Both escaped further injury, by the same rare good fortune that had attended them, with one exception, from the first. They were all the time in active service, but less exposed, on the staff of a division commander, than formerly.

John came home several times more before peace was achieved. He was always in capital spirits—the same jovial, clever fellow he had ever been. His successes had not made him vain.

“I’ve been very lucky,” he said to me, on his last furlough. “I shall come through this business all right, and shall have accumulated a snug little sum with which to commence somewhere for myself. When the war is over I shall marry, and settle down. I begin to want a home.”

"What will you go into?" I asked.

"I'd take to journalism in Metropolisville," he answered, "if I fancied playing second fiddle long enough. As it is, I shall buy a country paper, in some large village, or a part interest in some small city establishment. The general wants me to buy into 'The Bugle Blast,' in Ossoli, and perhaps I will. I've an idea he would like to be governor, by and by."

"And you will incline to politics, too, I suppose," said I. He laughed.

"Maybe so," was his answer. "I am not devoid of ambition, and out of war into politics, you know. There's no other field for popular success."

"You like success, then?"

"Of course. Any man does. It's rather a question with me, though, as to what kind of success will best please me. I like literary endeavor so well that I am almost tempted to work solely for success in that. But it comes slow, and it is too quiet for one who has led the life I have led. It is not exactly like live contact with men, I fancy. I am about persuaded that I will edit a smart daily paper, in some stirring little city like Ossoli, and one of these days go to Congress."

He spoke lightly, and with a laugh, but I saw that he was considerably in earnest, notwithstanding.

"We soldiers are going to have the inside track, when we come back," he continued. "We shall win as citizens, as we have won upon the field. Success there will give us success here. That's the way the general reasons," referring to his uncle, "and he's commonly right."

Events proved such reasoning true. Our victorious troops came home, and the country bowed to them loyally. They had conquered a peace; and we who were, with them, to enjoy the fruits thereof, could not feel too grate-

ful. The tattered banners they brought back to us were more eloquent than words.

John bought a controlling interest in "The Bugle Blast," at Ossoli, his uncle supplying what funds he had not already at hand, and after a few weeks of rest and recreation he settled squarely down to work. He came to Baylan often, and on one of his visits I had the pleasure of handing him a commission as brigadier-general by brevet, one of a large honorary batch some time delayed.

"Not of much use to you now," I remarked of the parchment.

"No," he said. "All that is gone by. I feel already as if it were a long way off. This will be suggestive, though, and I will hang it up in my home — when I get one."

"How soon?" I inquired, significantly.

"Next Christmas," he replied. "Miss Faythe can't be ready until then."

In the fall General Bremm was nominated for governor, and a lively canvass we had, all through the State. John entered it spiritedly, and with a determination to cancel some of the large debt of obligation he felt due. His uncle had really made him what he was, it seemed to him, and he was willing, even anxious, to do him service. He labored not only through his paper, but upon the stump. With fine natural gifts as an orator, his record and his enthusiasm told strongly with men. He rapidly developed a certain vim and dash which pleased the people, and gave him popularity at once. His candidate won. Israel Bremm was elected governor by an immense majority. But at what cost?

More than once John Bremm was helped to his room, after an enthusiastic meeting, and a hilarious hour suc-

ceeding, in a state bordering upon helpless intoxication. Of course he must drink. He could not mingle constantly with men of politics and always decline. He must maintain his popularity. He must court the favor of many whom at heart he despised. Such were his excuses, when his keen sense of respectableness and taste sometimes made protest. He had long since outgrown any real allegiance to principle, in this relation. He had persuaded himself that occasional drinking held no harm ; that only drunkenness was a thing especially bad, and to be shunned.

Yet he had never overcome that intuitive feeling which made him keep Geraldine ignorant of his moderate indulgence. How it was that she never suspected it, I cannot say ; probably her implicit faith in his nobleness is sufficient explanation. How she heard of it, at last, or just what she heard, I never asked. How she felt, and what she thought, this letter shows : —

BAYLAN, *November 10, 1865.*

MY DEAR FRIEND, — Your last letter was so happy and hopeful, and so full of glad expectation, and this of mine must be so very painful, you may almost think it unkind. But it is not that ; I should only be unkind to you, and unkind to myself, not to write it. I have been a great while bringing myself to say what I must say, now. I cannot tell you how much I have prayed over it, and how many, many times I have asked God to show me just what was right in his sight. For if I were to take counsel of my own will and wish alone, I might keep silent, and let it all go on.

You must know, since you believe in my love, that I have anticipated our union with as much of desire, perhaps, as you have anticipated it. I have longed to be so much more to you than now I can be — a hope and a help in your every day. I have wanted so much your help and your sympathy, constantly. It is not unmaidenly to say this, I trust. And I

would not willingly delay the day of that union we have each looked forward to. But, darling, — let me say it with my cheek against yours, — I am afraid. I am afraid to do what God would see to be a wrong.

You have been in great temptation, I know, and my heart finds for you a thousand excuses I cannot write down. You have not thought it dangerous to drink a little intoxicating liquor. You have simply done as you were led to do by force of circumstances. You have never even thought enough about it to mention it to me. But right here is the great danger of it all. Men have gone on just so thoughtlessly, and I shudder to think how they died. Do not you shudder, too?

I do not believe you are so weak as to become a drunkard, when once you stop and think, and I have no idea you have yet formed a habit which is so very strong you cannot overcome it. It is to cause you to think, and not form the habit, that I have written this. But I have hinted of a postponement of our marriage. Yes — and this is my reason for making the postponement. You have so often indulged in drink, and have so lately been often under its influence, that it may cost an effort for you to put it aside. My love is as strong for you as ever, but yet I want you to take time to conquer your appetite, if it has become an appetite, before we take any other vows upon us. Do not think I doubt you, darling, because I say this ; it is only, as I have already stated, that I fear to do what might be a great wrong.

You will not love me any less now, will you? If I thought you might, it would add sadly to the pain I feel as it is. And that is so deep that I think you must taste the tears upon my face while I now give you the good-night kiss.

GERALDINE.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

GERALDINE FAYTHE'S DECISION.

JOHN'S feeling, as he read the letter, was one of mingled shame, humiliation, resentment, and remorse. That Geraldine had come to know of his occasional yieldings shamed him. That he had fallen below his former place in her trust was humiliating to him. That she could thus, for no very serious reason, put him in any degree further from her, he was inclined to resent. And finally, that he had done aught which should bring about this result filled him with remorse.

At first he was moved to proceed directly to Baylan, and seek a personal interview, but shame kept him from that. It was a whole day before he could even write to her. Here is what he wrote : —

OSSOLI, *November 15, 1865.*

MY DARLING, — What can I say? Your letter is like a blow. It hits my love and my pride. I had not dreamed of ever receiving such an one. I thought you trusted me, and would trust me always. I confess I have erred a little; but not enough, I am sure, to merit the penalty you inflict. Some one must have exaggerated. I have at times drank rather too much, but never except I was led along by circumstances I could not control. You do not think I am a drunkard, I hope? That I could never be, because I do not naturally like liquor, and I have too much self-respect. My love for you, if nothing else, would keep me from that.

Then why should our marriage be postponed? Your con-

stant companionship would do a great deal to counteract the damaging influences with which I am often surrounded ; have you really any right to withhold what you can give ? I will promise anything in return — will even sign the pledge, if you insist upon it ; which should satisfy you entirely, should it not ?

My darling, I want you so ! Think of it, please. These years of battling and hardship I have had no home save in your love and confidence. The love I have yet ; give me still the confidence and we shall be happy and blessed together. I have been so long amid influences questionable, that it would not be strange if now I looked more lightly upon some things than you do ; and this is one of the reasons why I want you. Your letters have done more for me than I can tell ; but your daily life would do so very much more even than these ! Can you deprive me of an aid to the better purposes I would be glad to live out into form and experience ?

No, darling ; let it all go on. You shall have no further cause of complaint. For your sake I will say “ No ! ” to every invitation to drink. For your sake I would and will do whatever might give you pleasure — anything but accept the penalty of waiting which you have imposed. This is not for your pleasure ; I am convinced I can make you happier as your husband than you will be with months more of delay between us. Give up the idea of penance, then, and let me be wholly yours.

JOHN.

The letter did not suit him, when finished, but he sent it on, and throughout the week afterward he looked eagerly for a reply. When it came it read thus :—

BAYLAN, *November 22, 1865.*

DEAR HEART, — If your letter had been just an argument, I could have answered it at once. But you see it was an appeal, and my own heart heard it so sympathizingly that I had to stop and ask God.

The answer is what the other was — it would not be right.

If love were my only counsel, I presume I should consent to marry you as you might choose, but this question is one in which love does not stand alone. When you and I wed, as I fully expect some time we may, we must do it solemnly, with God's blessing upon us. I have thought about this a great deal, of late, and I am convinced that God ordains perfect sobriety to be an essential condition to the marriage state. I have seen so much of the wretchedness of drink, in the poor homes I visit week by week, that I cannot believe otherwise.

I wish you could have been with me the other afternoon, in one of my rounds. I found a couple who were both half drunk—a man and his wife. It was very little I could do for them, but the next morning early I went round again, so as to find them sober, if I could. The man was gone (to get his usual dram, I suppose) but the woman was home, and had slept off the effects of drink. It was a pitiful story she told me, so pitiful I cried as she told it. I am crying again now, as it comes back to me. It is too long to write down here, but this sums it up: she had once been a happy bride—as I hope to be. Her husband was noble and good, with prospects fair as most men have. He took to drink, and rapidly sank. Trouble came, and he sank lower and lower still. The wife suffered as so many poor women do suffer, and finally she took to drink, too, that she might forget.

Oh, my dear friend! the drink is an unholy thing, and an offense against God. You have promised me now to let it alone altogether, for I do, I must insist upon this; and when you have been so long an abstainer that there can be no danger, I shall gladly place my life where my heart long has been—in your keeping. But until you do this—hard as the pain is to say it—I must wait. You have talents with which to do a great deal of good, and by means of which you will surely become a strong example for good or bad. When we begin our married life I should almost die of grief if that example were not strongly for good, and I am certain that the man who sometimes drinks that which can intoxicate, even though he may *never* be intoxicated, cannot be such an exemplar as he ought.

I am not attempting to argue the question, dear heart. I am just hinting at a few truths which you can turn into arguments, if you will. But spite of hints or arguments, or occasion for either, I love you, as I ever must. You know this, you will always know it. One of these days, not so very far distant, I shall prove it to you morning, noon, and night, and you will know how fully and unalterably I am your

GERALDINE.

John Bremm was naturally fair-minded and reasonable, and yet he chafed somewhat under the position this letter assumed. He had been foolish, he was willing to admit. He had not been in real danger; there was no danger now. Geraldine was carrying her idea of right and duty too far. But for all this, he loved her, and he could not avoid feeling an increase of that respect he had so long held for her purity of motive, and her strong conscientiousness. And knowing how firmly she stood by what she believed duty, he accepted her decision, after a little of further remonstrating, and agreed to bide her time.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WINNING HOPE.

HOPE HENSELL, having thoroughly fitted herself for the work, was offered a position in the Normal School at Ossoli, as teacher of elocution, and accepted it. She had a little battle with herself, first. She knew John was in Ossoli, of course. She had conquered her old love for him — that she was confident of. But was it best to go where she might meet him often? where there might be such frequent reminders of all that had gone by? When she began laughing at the question as a foolish one, it was settled. To be laughed at, even by one's self, is not a satisfying thing.

She did meet John frequently. Perhaps she sometimes felt a little tremor at the heart, hearing his well-remembered voice, and thinking, as I am certain she must have thought, of their earlier association. She never betrayed any other than the proper sisterly feeling. John called upon her often, during the winter that ensued, took her out occasionally to a lecture or concert, reëstablished himself, to quite an extent, in his former relationship to her. She had grown rather more dignified and reserved; he noticed that. The little familiarities of previous years he hardly dared presume upon.

Hope gave a public reading upon the lecture course, before the winter ended. John's good words, through his paper, drew a full house. John felt almost as deep an

interest in her success as she felt, and she was greatly indebted to him for the unqualified success she won. For she was remarkably successful. John said the way in which she carried that large audience with her, from the very outset, was astonishing. I have heard her read many times since, and very well know the marvelous purity, richness, scope, and flexibility of her voice. She was dramatic, too, and had carefully studied effects. Those great, strange eyes of hers — not now seemingly so great or strange as ten years before — were a strong accessory. They expressed more than any mere words can of pathos and power.

I have never been enthusiastic over readings, as a means of public entertainment, possibly for the reason that we have so few really good readers. But I had to confess, after hearing Miss Hensell, that somewhat of the true spirit of oratory might pervade mere elocutionary effort. Some of her recitations were thrilling; she gave the stale lines of several well-known pieces with as much feeling, and moved her hearers as deeply, as though the words were her own soul's utterance, and now first breathed forth.

After the readings were over, and while the audience were passing out, a few friends gathered about Hope, upon the platform, and said their compliments. Another joined them, as they were about to leave.

"May I add my congratulations upon your success, Miss Hensell?" he asked.

"Why, Mr. Burley!" was Hope's surprised response, as she warmly clasped his hand. "How came *you* to be here?"

"I came to hear you read," he said.

"But you surely did not come all the way from Liscomb for that purpose?"

"No ; but if I had I should have been well paid. I came from Perrin, where I am teaching now."

John stepped forward, with his old-time hearty greeting.

"You will stop in town a day or two?" he said.

"I would like to, so as to look through the school," Burley replied.

"Then suppose you see Hope home, in the carriage which is waiting, and I will go and look to some matters which demand my attention to-night."

Burley rode home with Hope, and accepted her invitation to go in. They had been very good friends up to the time of her leaving Liscomb, but in a rather quiet, undemonstrative way. He had genuine manhood in him, and would compel respect and regard from any one.

"You must be very tired, Miss Hensell," he said, "and I ought not to tax you with my company now."

"Call me Hope, as you used to do, please. I am 'Miss Hensell' to every one nowadays but John, and I am fairly homesick for my home name. Yes, I am tired ; but you shall stay and rest me for an hour with the sight of an old friend's face, and the sound of an old friend's voice. The mere seeing you has set me hungry for home. When did you forsake Liscomb?"

"Within a month after you did."

"And mother never wrote me so important an item of news. But what was 'The Telescope' doing, that it did not speak of it?"

"I believe there was a paragraph in it, to the effect that Albert Burley, who had been so long connected with the Academy in our midst, was about removing to Perrin, to become Principal of the Young Ladies' Seminary there."

"But why did you go?"

"Because I was offered a better position than I could

have in Liscomb, and because I was lonesome after you left."

"And because you had lost one young lady's society, you sought compensation in the having fifty or a hundred young ladies to care for every day? You are not lonesome any longer?" and she laughed, as she put the question.

"Yes; I have been lonesome every day until now."

He spoke so earnestly that she was sobered at once. There had never been any tender passages, any make-believes of love, between these two. It had somehow never occurred to her that quiet Albert Burley could talk sentiment. Was it leading to this now? She trembled a little, she knew not why.

"I came to Ossoli for two purposes—to hear you read, and to look into your face."

"And don't you care to hear me talk?" she asked lightly, pleased in her half-homesickness, but puzzled as to what would come of such words from him.

"Yes, if you will say what I most desire to have said."

He looked at her so searchingly that she blushed and was silent.

"Shall I tell you what that is?" he went on to ask.

"I shall not certainly know unless you do tell me, and then I may not say it. Is it best to take the risk?"

Her question had its meaning, and was not encouraging.

"There can be no greater risk in speaking than in preserving silence longer. I will take the risk. I want you to say you love me, and will be my wife. My love for you is not the growth of a day. It has been strengthening with my strength, for years. Until you went away from Liscomb I did not realize how strong it was. It is my life. Can you say what I want said?"

Hope hesitated. The tears gathered in her eyes before she made any answer.

"I almost wish I could," she said, slowly. "I respect you ; I like you " —

"But you do not love me ? "

"No ; I do not. And you would not wish me to say I will be your wife without loving you ? "

"The love might come, perhaps. I would wait."

"I will be very frank with you, Mr. Burley. I may never love any one — again. I have buried my love, once ; it has shown no signs of a resurrection since. I am not heart-broken ; I cherish no great disappointment ; I may love another as deeply as I once loved John Bremm ; but it does not seem quite certain to me now. I will say this much ; that I know no man more likely to win my love back to life once more than you. I have been dreaming, a long while, of perfect content and peace in professional success, but my first tastes of it do not quite satisfy. Even to-night I am hungry for something more. Perhaps it is for your love. Any woman should be glad and proud of that."

"I think you can love me yet, Hope. If you can meet John here, as you do, and speak so confidently of your love for him as a by-gone thing, I am sure you will. As I said, I will wait. Only promise me this : if I win your love at all, you will be my wife ? "

She bent her head a moment, and when she lifted it again her face was full of joy.

"I think you have won a little of it already," she said, "and I give the promise."

CHAPTER XL.

POLITICAL SUCCESS.

THROUGHOUT the spring and summer ensuing, nothing striking occurred. Albert Burley and Hope corresponded regularly, and though he tried to hold his love from expression, it expressed itself often, but always so delicately that she was pleased. She came to look eagerly for his letters, and to find more and more pleasure in replying to them. If he had obtrusively shown her his whole heart, over and over again, as a more demonstrative or less sagacious man might have done, I suspect she would have tired of him. The very fact that he was so delicately considerate, in all that he said or did, told strongly in his favor.

Several times he ran up to Ossoli, which was only thirty miles by rail from Perrin, and had pleasant little visits with Hope, as with John, whom he ostensibly went to see. By the next fall he felt tolerably satisfied that Hope would one day be his ; but he could not be ready for marriage under another year, and he was patient enough to wait.

John stood squarely by his purpose not to drink. Other than the promise to Miss Faythe, he took no pledge. In a way he regarded that promise binding ; but it was not exactly to him a solemn vow. Still, he meant never to drink again. It was safer not to, he knew. There was really no need. Sometimes he craved indulgence ; but

the craving did not master him. Often he was sorely pressed to drink ; but such invitations always brought Geraldine vividly before his mind, and met only good-natured refusals.

He came to Baylan once a month or so, and it was ever a pleasure to shake his honest hand. He often spoke frankly of his successes, his plans, and his hopes.

Geraldine helped him, by her frequent letters, her freely yielded love, her fervent prayers. Whenever he mentioned her to any of the very few who knew their relationship, it was with a tenderness, almost a reverence, very beautiful indeed.

Toward the end of summer, he won from Miss Faythe a promise that their union should be consummated the next Christmas — if it seemed right. She would make this proviso, despite his many pleas against it. “We want to do as God wills,” was her only explanation. Sometimes her pious upgiving of selfish desires rather vexed him, for the moment. Sometimes he was tempted to laugh at her trust, and to complain because she so regularly put her love of God in the way of her love for him. But he never did.

The political campaign that fall bade fair to prove very lively, and both parties cast about for strong, popular candidates. At the Congressional Convention of John’s party, there were two strong men pressed, each by a faction zealous and unyielding. The balloting continued all one day, without result. It finally became apparent that a third man must be fixed upon, who would command the confidence of both factions, and thus it was that John was made the nominee. When his name was proposed it was greeted by one tremendous outburst of cheers, and he was nominated the next moment by acclamation, an honor as great as it was then unexpected.

His speech in acknowledgment carried the convention by storm, and convinced all that no mistake had been made, albeit the candidate was so young, and, in practical legislation, so inexperienced.

Miss Faythe was both gratified and pained, when she heard of John's nomination. She realized the high compliment her lover had received ; she feared for the result. The very same evening the news reached her she wrote him a long, loving letter, and in it she said : —

I am almost afraid for you, my dear friend. You will have to go through another season of speech-making, and all that, and you may be tempted more than you can bear. I don't believe political association is very good for you, or for any one. I want you to be elected, of course I do, and yet I would far rather that you should not be, than that you should win election at the cost of your principle. You understand what I mean ? I have no fear that you will ever sacrifice any principle but that of temperance. Until now, for these many months past, I have felt no fear with regard to this. Is my fear such a very foolish one now ?

I hope it is. Please do not let it trouble you. Only I could not rest, somehow, without writing you of my misgivings over this new mark of popular favor which you have received, as well as my gratification. Before my letter is ended I am feeling less and less of doubt, and I will take this as a good omen. You must be given of God to do great things for Him and your fellow-men. Else why are you permitted to receive such high marks of recognition and esteem ? I think you will do all that is expected of you. I believe in you, dear heart, as I never did before, somehow. And I will pray for you even more earnestly, never forgetting to pray that you may pray for yourself.

John's response was noble and manly, and encouraged her still more. He realized, he said, that his responsibilities and temptations were largely increased ; that he must set a yet more careful watch over his life ; that as

he was now brought prominently before the public he owed it to himself, to the party he represented, to common morality, and to his Maker, to acquit himself blamelessly. This he should do. She might give up any questionings, and rest quietly content in his love. Only one favor he would ask : his election was almost a certainty ; Congress would assemble early in December ; might they not be married before that time, so that she could accompany him to Washington, and spend the winter there ? To which query she responded affirmatively, with her accustomed modification of, "if it shall seem best."

John Bremm did acquit himself blamelessly, through the whole short but enthusiastic canvass. He won favor among men of all parties, by his straightforward bearing, by the courteous fairness of his speech, by the manliness which characterized his entire action. The opposition could bring no more serious charge against him than that he had been known to drink. This they harped upon so persistently that he at last came out with a frank, honest letter, printed in his own paper, in which he confessed to former semi-intemperate habits, but affirming that for nearly a year he had not drank one drop of intoxicating liquor, and declaring it his firm purpose never to drink any more.

He won the political race. His majority was something unequaled in all the past victories his party had achieved, and of course he was elated with the result. Returns did not come in from the entire district until the day succeeding election, and in the evening his political friends tendered him a complimentary serenade. Half of Ossoli went out upon the street to see and hear. John made a speech of thanks, from the hotel balcony, and ended by inviting his friends in to partake of refreshments. He thought he was strong, but this was a test of strength he should not have made.

The company was a merry one. The young Congressman-elect was host, and a liberal one he must be, after such an indorsement as had been given him at the polls. A fine supper was served, the landlord having received previous orders, and a jolly time they had of it. Success had not thus far overmastered him. Though he knew liquor would be expected of him he did not call for it. One of his rich partisans noted the omission, and fearing Bremm might be thought mean, he quietly gave the order, and champagne presently flowed free for all. John could not refuse to drink, when the wealthy and influential partisan who had ordered the wine rose and pledged his future, and having drank once, he drank and drank again.

Before all late sitters had departed he was noticeably under the liquor's influence, and it was with difficulty that he kept up decent appearances until the last. When he finally sought his bed, the landlord's aid was needed, for his condition was pitiable indeed.

The opposition newspaper, in its issue next day, had this significant paragraph:—

General John Bremm, the newly elected Congressman, was serenaded at the Buckstone House last evening, and treated his admirers to a handsome supper. We shall not undertake to say how many cases of champagne were opened, but there was all the company wanted to drink, and rather more than some of them could well carry, at the close. If it had not been for mine host Roslyn, the gallant general himself would have gone to bed with his boots on.

CHAPTER XLI.

A SORE STRUGGLE.

SOME one, with either kind or unkind intention, sent Miss Faythe a copy of the paper, with this paragraph marked. The purport of it was not quite clear to her, at first. She read it through two or three times before she realized what it surely meant for her.

For strong as was her love, Geraldine Faythe was equally strong and immovable in her conviction that the woman who would marry a man given to drink was holden before God for a great sin. She had somehow grown into this conviction, and in such a nature as hers, convictions are not easily swept away. There was but one natural result, then: her marriage must be again postponed. If she had counted as certainly upon its speedy consummation as had John, her disappointment would have been greater. As it was, though, she felt very deeply pained.

Her expectation was keen as any child's. She had looked forward to a winter in Washington with delight. Life always held more for her than the average person. In every little pleasure she saw more than most of us see. But this was not all. She believed that as John's wife she could help him, day by day; that she could be to him a comfort and a rest; that she might, under God, lead him up to a higher life of thought and trust. Sometimes, too, she felt sorely her need of him; sometimes she

seemed so weak and tired and uncertain, that her whole being was just a crying out for his unchecked love and sympathy, his full support.

Her need never had appeared so strong and uncompromising as it did for two or three days after that paper came. Every waking hour was a battle of her conviction with her love and her desire. All the arguments that love could offer arrayed themselves on one side ; and they were many. Over against these stood simply the one argument of Right. There were numerous reasons why it would be unwise, as she thought, to marry John now ; but they were fully met by desire. Privation might come of intemperance ; but she would willingly share this. Hardships and suffering might ensue ; but her love could conquer these. If only in God's sight it would not be wrong !

It was a bitter battle that she passed through, and she had no human help. No one of her family felt as she did, touching the right and wrong of many things. She could not find counsel in a mother's words, in times like this. She could only, as her phrase had expressed it, ask God.

When she had fought the battle all through, and it had left her weak and worn, but a victor, John came, and it was opened once more. He would have kept his one indulgence from her, perhaps, but she showed him the paper, and looked at him with so much sorrow in her eyes, that he was stricken anew with remorse. His confession was honest and his pledges sincere. His grief over the slip, he said, had been as great as her own could be ; and seeing the strong man shaken by it, as he once more was, pity pleaded with her most touchingly.

"I cannot do without you," John said, finally. "God only knows how I need you here. In Washington my

need will be greater yet. It is not right in you to withhold the help you can grant. Don't you see it was meant that you should be my helper? You have a faith never given to me, and a holier purpose than I can ever attain to. Why keep these from me any longer? If I had you near me always, I could not fall."

"You cannot have me with you always, even if I become your wife. I could not have been with you at that supper the other night. Would you not have been just as apt to drink, with me waiting for you in our home, as you were with me here?"

"No!" he answered quickly. "I should not have drank to excess, as I did; you may be sure of that."

"But you did not mean to drink to excess, did you? What proof is there that while not meaning to drink to excess, if married, you would refrain any more than now?"

"Would you not have my love as proof?"

"But I have your love already. If love does not keep you from excess now, I fear it would fail always."

"Your daily influence would work with it, and the two could not fail. Oh, Geraldine! you must not hold out against me. It will be a positive sin," and he spoke so vehemently that she trembled. For an instant she shut her eyes, and made no reply.

"I should believe what you say about the daily influence—I should so like to believe it—if I had never known any testimony to the contrary. But so many women have been talked to just as you are talking to me, and in so many instances their influence was of no avail. One of my best school friends is wretched now, as a wife, because she believed she could reform the man of her choice after marrying him. I have known several other such cases."

"But these women were not you, and they could not do for a man what you can do for me. That makes all the difference."

"My dear friend," — and she spoke low and hesitatingly, — "I am as weak as any one of them. I am just a woman, like the rest. You would lean on me, and you would go down."

"No, no ; you are nervous and afraid. There is no danger. I shall hold you to your promise, but to-night you are tired and almost sick, and we will drop the subject, and I will go away. To-morrow I will come again, and you will think differently."

All the night long she fought her battle over again. A weary, wearing struggle it was, and the morning found her absolutely exhausted, the weakest, most dispirited victor that ever won a conflict. When John came she could not see him, but sent this little note down in apology : —

I am too ill to meet you this morning — too ill, and too weak. I must do right in this matter, and I dare not hear the pleadings of your love until I feel stronger. Give me a little time. Go back to Ossoli, and let me think. I am not unkind, but I must be just to myself and to God. And yet I am always your
GERALDINE.

John returned to Ossoli hurt, and sorry and almost discouraged. He felt wronged, but he hardly knew how. One hour he was very bitter at heart toward Geraldine's obstinacy, as he was inclined to call her firm holding to a conviction ; the next his heart yearned toward her with a tenderness and longing he could not displace. He wrote her a long, appealing letter, soon after reaching home, going over all the arguments once more, and making the strongest pleas his pen and his love could syllable. By and by came the answer, and the latter part of it ran thus : —

The great question with me, my dear friend, has been of my duty as related to your need. You say you need me so much, and you think with me you would not fall, and you feel confident that I owe it to you to give you all the help I can. I have asked God every hour, almost, since you left, about this very point. You see I want so to answer your need, and be all the help to you I can. But this is the way it looks to me — that a man should be strictly temperate just from his own principle. What you ought to do in this matter, and what habit you should indulge, are questions that I have really no part in. You should put me out of your thoughts, while thinking of the matter. It does not seem to be right that a man should want to marry a woman just to hold him to such conduct as his own force of character, together with his strength of principle, is not strong enough to hold him to.

Does this sound harshly to you? It pains me to pen such words, but I am speaking frankly. I must. I should never forgive myself if I failed to say what comes to me, as I feel, on purpose to be said.

Then as to help: dear heart, God's help is a great deal better than mine. He is never weak. He never errs. He is with you constantly; He can assist at times when my assistance could not reach you. You have his help now, or you may have it. And if you will take Him as your constant companion, before you take me, I shall have no fear. I can trust his support for you; I only distrust you as I distrust myself.

No, my friend, we will wait. You will not need me in Washington, if you have God. And I shall never forget to ask Him to go with you wherever you go, and to hold you every hour by the hand. You may come to me as often as you can until you go away for the winter, for you will not urge me any more now. I feel settled about it. Another year, if you wish, and it seems best, but not before. But there is no past or future to my love — it is all now. And even now I am your

GERALDINE.

CHAPTER XLII.

“VANITY OF VANITIES.”

JOHN was so thoroughly dissatisfied — with Geraldine, himself, and life in general — when he read the letter, that he felt as if anything would be better than to stay there quietly in Ossoli and think. So he stepped on board the cars and rode to Perrin, for a chat with Burley.

It was Burley's leisure day, and John found him recreating amid chemical apparatus, in the laboratory.

“It will be a mercy to you, old boy, to get you away from the atmosphere of study for a few hours,” John said. “Come! Let's stroll off on to the hills, as we used to do.”

It was an October day, that had slept somehow, until a full month past its time. We get such an one, occasionally, in November, and it is like a smile on a dead face. And is it not, indeed, the dead summer smiling its farewell?

Perrin is situated very much as Liscomb is, and when they had climbed above the town and could look down upon it, each thought of his boyhood.

“Do you ever wish you were back there, Bert?” asked John.

“On the old farm again? Yes. That is natural, I suppose. We never get quite beyond ourselves as we were, do we?”

“Perhaps not, in one sense. In another sense we do.

I am a long way further from my boyhood than I wish I was. It seems the weariest distance behind me."

"Well, that is natural, too. You have crowded more life into the last dozen years than we quiet souls may ever live. Days do not measure years ; it is experience."

"Yes ; I know. But the experience may measure a great deal that we wish it could n't. Mine does — does not yours ?"

"My opportunities have been small, and I have not seen much that I did not care to see. You who have larger opportunities, and win great successes, must pay for them in some manner, I suppose ;" and Burley smiled as he said this.

John answered his smile with a bitter laugh.

"What does success mean?" he asked, doubtingly. "What is it, anyhow? Who is successful?"

"There is a prevalent opinion that one General John Bremm, just elected to Congress in this district, has been quite successful, as the word goes," Burley responded, with no real levity in his tone. "I knew him when he was but a poor farmer's boy ; then when he became a writer for the press. He is now well-to-do in the world, has an enviable reputation as a soldier, can make a capital speech, stands well as an editor, and, his friends believe, will make his mark at Washington. I suspect the world would say *he* is truly successful."

"And the world would say wrong?" still with the bitter laugh running along-side his words.

Burley stopped a moment, and looked at John, as he had not looked at him before. He saw that something had gone wrong with him.

"Yes, the world would say wrong," said he.

"Why?"

"Because true success brings with it true satisfaction,

and you are not satisfied. You are not at peace with yourself. Honestly, John, are you?"

John laughed again, this time less bitterly.

"Honestly, I am not. But then, no one ever is. Life is all a vanity and a vexation of spirit. The wisest of men said so, and he ought to have known. I am more than ever persuaded he told the truth."

Burley laughed a little, in turn.

"I am a trifle heretical upon that point," he replied. "Stay with me until Monday, and I will tell you what I think of Solomon's declaration. I am to preach, to-morrow, and my text will be just 'Vanity of vanities.'"

"Stay? of course I'll stay. And so you've taken to preaching?"

"Oh no; only now and then, as there's a call. One of the ministers here is sick, and I fill his place. I'm but a lay preacher, like yourself; only I preach in the pulpit, and you preach through your paper."

"And I preach politics, and you preach" —

"Wait until to-morrow and you will know. It may not be strictly theology, for I'm not read up in that, yet, but I try to have it good Christian common-sense."

They went to church together, next morning, and when one had taken a seat in the pulpit, and the other in a pew, there seemed a great and widening distance between them. It humbled John Bremm, some way. He had never thought long upon the soberer things of life, but he had held, and held still, a high respect for God's appointed ministers, albeit he had seen some, during his army experience, who sadly belied their work. Now here was Albert Burley, accounted worthy — and, as he was confident, justly so — to minister of God. Was not the unpretending teacher, who had won no fame, who had never been praised and flattered and helped on, immeas-

urably superior to himself? Had not the quiet life of his friend been worth far more than his own noisy one? Granting even that he had not taken so many steps into sin as he had taken, what did his life amount to, anyhow?

In such lines did John's thoughts run on, through the opening services. You see he was just now very bitter against himself. He had really believed in John Bremm until the past few days. He had held himself in fair esteem. He had thought uncommonly well of himself, perhaps. You have noticed that when two especially good friends fall out they are apt to be especially bitter enemies? Such was the relationship in which John Bremm stood to himself at this time.

I am not sure but Albert Burley, in his own person, was a better sermon to John than the words he said. Yet the words were very keen and searching, some of them. John almost forgot to whom he was listening, after a little, so fresh and fervent was the thought. Were the preacher's views heretical? In a way, yes. He spoke of the unwisdom of Solomon, so long accepted as Wisdom's embodiment, and boldly urged that when Solomon declared life to be all a vanity he was wrong. "I hold," said he, "that life is very much more than vanity and vexation of spirit;" and some of his reasons were strong ones, I must confess. Thus the argument ran:—

To begin with, life is the gift of God. Is God's gift only for a vexation of soul? Are the things He metes out to us day by day only vanities? Must daily being prove of necessity the stale, trite story Solomon made complaint about, when we are assured that God is our Father, and his bounties are new every morning and fresh every evening? No, no! In the deepest and truest and far the best sense, Solomon was wrong in his estimate. The gift of life temporal was made by

God as preparatory to that other and grander gift of life eternal. Think you the preparation would be all vanity when the ultimate end should be so real it would never know ending? Fleeting is this life? True; but still not vanity. Changeful is it? True; but still not vanity. Perplexing is it, and wearisome? True, again; but again, not vanity.

We may pervert the individual being, and make it wretchedly mean and meagre; we may individually live on so low a level that the vexation of spirit abides with us continually; but the grand fact is fixed and unalterable, life is not vanity. If it were, I should hope Solomon was right in some of his other sayings, and that the end of a man is as the end of a beast—that “there is neither knowledge, nor wisdom, nor device in the grave.” If the gift of life here *were* all a vanity, I would pray God to withhold from me the gift of a life hereafter; for in what a woeful condition must we go from the one to the other!

Then if there were no other reason, I should think the drift of Solomon’s complaining discourse wrong, because a later preacher spoke in such wide contrast. Hear Him on the Mount: “Blessed are the poor; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are they which do hunger and thirst”—blessed, blessed, blessed—in what? In that which was only vanity? I cannot think so. Blessed in some life yet to come? That also, beyond question; but before that, blessed here.

“It befalleth a man as it befalleth a beast,” said Solomon. “I go to prepare a place for you,” said the Better Preacher. “Man dies as the beast dies,” wailed out the complaining king. “I am the resurrection and the life,” said He who was greater than Solomon. Solomon was wrong, and Jesus Christ was right.

How many tributes Christ paid to the worth of life. See Him, upon the way. A bier approaches, and a weeping concourse of followers. Has one slipped away from vanity and vexation of soul? More than this: one has gone out of life. Think you Jesus would have stood in the way of that widow’s sorrow as He did, with his “I say unto thee, Young man,

arise!" if it had been raising one up only to vanity? Standing at the tomb of his dead friend in Bethany, whom He loved, would He have bidden "Lazarus, come forth!" to nothing more than vanity? Never! For the sick whom He healed, for the dead whom He restored to life, He saw better possibilities. He knew what they might make of living; what his Father had granted unto all to make of it. He saw its beauties, its grandeur, its nobleness, as only God and his Son can see them. He measured life as the best of us may never expect to measure it, and to it He paid divinest tribute. It is true, that all these thousands of years men have been testing life. Millions have tested it after the foolish manner of Solomon, and have as foolishly cried out that all is vanity, at the end; and yet I do not believe it. Other millions have tested it in wiser ways, and have given in their testimony that life is a good thing, and a worthful; and this I do believe, because superadded to it I have the fact of Christ's life, and the crying out of my own soul.

Whenever men have put heart and manhood into living, instead of self and lust, the end has been not so much a complaint as a glorying. Louis XV., steeped in the vices of the most vicious French court of all history, might reëcho the wail of his ante-type; but other men, kinglier than he in real kingship, testify more truly. Men nerved with high purpose, and partakers of the strength of God, have wrought out a better consummation than failure and regret.

Worthy work makes life more than vanity. I think of a man now whose testimony at the end was in wide contrast to that of Solomon, as indeed his life was in wide contrast to Solomon's life. He was a worker in the early Christian time; his pleasure for long and weary years was to do the Master's service. He endured fatigue, and persecution, and suffering; and yet what did he finally declare? "I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith!" And as a consequence, he could add, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!" Ah, my friends! St. Paul was a better Christian than Solomon. St. Paul was right, and Solomon was wrong!

There was more than this. Indeed, I have given but a part of the main argument of the sermon, which I heard Burley repeat, some time afterward. There were a few touching words at the close, I remember, in pity for those who come nigh to the end with doubting and complaint, and only a cold religious philosophy for comfort; and these were followed by some bits of glad rejoicing for such as grow into trust as they grow into years, and finally go out of life as into a great joy.

John had never listened to a sermon just like this. He had been used to hearing the life hereafter glorified from the pulpit; he had never before heard a preacher so glorify the life here. Then it came at a time most opportune. Burley must have preached it, so it seemed, for him.

His eyes were moistened more than once, with a feeling he could not have analyzed. Was it alone the sad music in Burley's voice, wedded to the pathos of his thought, that touched him? The tears gathered for a ready flow, as the young preacher recited those tender words of faith: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

There was not much talk between the two friends, as they left the church.

"I am glad I came," said John, simply. "Your sermon was true, and it has helped me."

"It has helped me, too. I think perhaps I got more good out of it than any other one could."

"I do not understand that," John answered. "You

have been living up to the measurement of an honest, earnest life. It could not suggest to you all it might suggest to others."

"No man lives up to the measurement, John. Not many fail as wretchedly as Solomon failed ; none succeed as did Christ."

CHAPTER XLIII.

IN CONGRESS.

MOODS do not last. Back again in his sanctum, next day, there were a hundred things to drive all bitterness, all unusual soberness, out of John Bremm's mind. The few days intervening before he must be in Washington were so full of matters political, of personal business, and the like, that he could only visit Baylan once. His disappointment over Geraldine's decision did not die out, but it was covered up. It was well, I think, that the other things came in as they did.

When Congress met there was enough to think of and take part in — enough of legislative business, and official annoyances, and social being and doing. As you know, John's sociality was large. Here it had full and constant opportunity. He was an eligible escort for the pretty daughters of Senator This and Secretary That ; he had a fine record, and was popular wherever he went ; he was accounted one of the rising young men of the House. He was presently on as good terms with himself as ever he had known ; esteemed himself as highly, believed as implicitly in his own capacity and his own strength.

For a time he wrote Miss Faythe quite fully of his socializing, as of all his daily life. By and by he spoke of it but cursorily. He felt, as by intuition, that it did not harmonize with her nature, her tastes. He knew, when he stopped to think of it, that the life he lived was

far below the standard Burley had placed before him. In his few reflective moments he turned from it, half discouraged, wholly dissatisfied, and with hunger in his soul.

Hull Latimer went to Washington toward spring, and the report he brought back was not just what we hoped to hear.

“Bremm does his duty as a representative,” he said, “and stands well. There are few whose prospects look fairer than his. But I ’m afraid for him.”

Before Congress adjourned I had business in Washington, and also saw John. To my surprise, he asked me out to drink. My somewhat astonished look called forth a word or two apologetic.

“We have to do this in Washington. The very air is different here. I am a temperance man at home, but everybody drinks at the capital.”

“Does Miss Faythe know?” I asked, significantly.

“No; there is no need. When I return I shall drop the habit. In Rome, I must do as the Romans do. I don’t care for liquor: I only drink because custom compels it.”

“But you say she will not marry you so long as you drink. Have you given her up, then?”

“Not by any means,” and he spoke half indignantly. “She will change her notions about that; she can’t help it. We must not attempt to overturn the customs of good society.”

When John returned home he found it not so easy to give up what had become a daily habit. He had been a Roman so long in Rome that now he was in Ossoli once more it was easier to be a Roman still. He did not dissipate to great excess, but he could not possibly have passed now for a temperance man.

Albert Burley and Hope were married soon after John’s

return, and he spent a few days in Liscomb to attend the wedding. It was a very quiet affair. Few more completely satisfied brides ever were seen, than the one Burley saluted with almost reverent kiss, after the ceremony was done. She had outgrown her earlier love ; indeed, it no longer seemed a love to her, only just a school-girl's fancy. She had come to feel for certain things a peculiar commiseration, but not regret.

"I look back and see myself as I was then," she said once to Burley, "and I think it must have been some one else. And I really have a kind of pity for such a young, inexperienced thing, who did not know the half that I know now."

And Burley was satisfied. He had never been jealous of John. He never would be. Even had he believed that Hope once did freely love another, it made no difference. She loved *him* now ; of this he had not a doubt. She loved him, and her love would last.

They settled down at Perrin, after a few weeks of journeying, and John visited them briefly, a few times, before Congress came together again. It pained them to see even faint signs of dissipation upon him.

Once when he came to Baylan, in the fall, we spoke of the coming session. "You will be married before it begins, I suppose," said I.

"Don't mention it," was his response. "Miss Faythe is obdurate — foolishly so. She will not marry me until I have abstained from liquor for a year, at least."

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"Going to let the stuff alone!" said he, most emphatically, and I wrung his hand for joy at the words.

"Stick by your resolution," I counseled. "Geraldine Faythe is worth any sacrifice. More than all that, John, *she is right*. I honor her sense ; and so will you some day."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE FAILURE OF SUCCESS.

TOWARD the end of winter, in one of his letters to Miss Faythe, John wrote as follows : —

My complete happiness, darling, is only a question of time. I have not drank a drop of intoxicating liquor since I came to Washington, and if I can let it quite alone here, I am sure I can do so anywhere. I will not say I have not been tempted, but my promise to you shall be kept, you may rely upon it. You are more to me than the demands of society or the cravings of appetite ever can be. If I only had you with me now ! But I know how decided you are to wait until next fall before I may claim you, and I am not going to try to change your mind. You may as well count it certain, though, that before next December comes you are to be mine.

I have never resolutely resolved not to drink any more, until this time. I thought I had, but I had n't. It does not seem so hard now. I can withstand temptation far easier than I ever could before, and have no fears for the future.

This very much encouraged Miss Faythe. She felt a great load lifted from her heart. In her reply she said : —

I shall never doubt God any more. I have not dared to ask you about this, fearing — I know not what. But I have asked God for you every day, almost every hour. I know He hears me when I ask aright.

I have so wanted you to be a strong power for good. It does seem to me, dear heart, that you have been drifted along thus far through the world, and that some such test as you are now

put to was needed, to develop the real manhood in you. Of course I know you have done manly things, and have shown yourself very brave ; but these are what men look at. Perhaps God thinks less of all that, and more of the bravery of one's inner life. But this sounds like preaching and I have given you enough (too much ?) of that heretofore.

I shall be ready by December — or when God wills — to say to all the world that I am your
GERALDINE.

General John Bremm's popularity was so great that when the next summer came his renomination was generally conceded. But after a little, complications arose. Some radical temperance men objected to him as a candidate, and proposed to run him off the track within his own party. First they came and sought pledges from him that he would support only such men as they might name, for political position ; and these he would not give. Then they tried to defeat him in convention, and failed. Then they put up an independent nominee, who secretly sold out to the opposition, and succeeded in being placed upon the opposition ticket also.

Matters looked squally for "General John," as he was often termed by those who knew both him and the Governor. He came to Baylan and had long conferences with his Excellency, Israel Bremm. I was present at one of these.

"Those temperance men are beautifully wooled," said the Governor. "Do they suppose Stanwix would be indorsed by our opponents, if he were an honest temperance candidate? They will find out their mistake after election, if you are defeated. If the opposition did not concede you great strength, they would have put up one of their own men, sure. They evidently thought you could beat them, and this faction too, unless they combined, and that the chance of half a loaf was better than

positively no bread. Stanwix has bargained with them, as his friends will learn."

"And his bargain, I am afraid, will defeat me," said John.

"We must not let it," promptly answered Governor Bremm. "It is not so hard a thing to manage. Stanwix is not an acceptable candidate to the mass of those who are asked to elect him, for he is an avowed temperance man, and has all along been with us. Our regular opposition leaders dare not inform their rank and file of his true position, because in doing that they must also post the temperance faction, which never would do at all. We have an anomaly in politics — a liquor party supporting a temperance nominee because political leadership says they must. Their support will be under protest, and some of it can be turned over to you. That can be easily done. You are not as objectionable on the score of temperance as Stanwix is, and you can make yourself still less so — until after election at least," and his Excellency smiled meaningly.

"But I *am* a temperance man," John said, with an earnestness which gratified me. "I mean to remain one."

"Of course, of course," said Governor Bremm, modifyingly. "You need not sacrifice any of your own notions. Just let your friends manage it. Stanwix is a good temperance man — know him like a book. But his friends will put up free liquor when the proper time comes; your friends must do likewise — and a little more so. Our folks will see that the Central Committee has funds enough. We may not be able to buy many votes from the temperance faction; but plenty can be had of our old opponents as usual. We may have to negotiate for a few more than usual, that's all."

A more bitter political fight was never waged in the

Ossoli district than that which followed. Beginning early, it was prosecuted by all parties concerned with a vigor that approached malignity. Long before the end John wished it over, and would have withdrawn from it, but for pride's sake and party enthusiasm.

"I wish you were well out of this political muss," said Burley to him, one day. "Such contests, conducted as this is being conducted, must blunt any man's moral sense. You were made for better work than soils your hands now."

"You're right, there, Burley," was John's frank response. "Once over this fight and they won't coax me into another. But I can't desert now. I am enlisted for the war, and I'll battle to the end, cost what it may."

"Take care that it does not cost you Geraldine Faythe," Burley answered, for he knew nearly all the facts about their relationship.

"It cannot do that," John said, quickly, but soberly. "I have not touched a glass of liquor yet, and I do not mean to until my year is up."

But was it possible for a man to be elected by such instrumentalities as elected John Bremm, and come out unharmed? Perhaps. The juggler handles red-hot coals in presence of his spectators, and is not burned; but not one of the many hundreds who look on could escape injury should they try his feat.

When the fight waged bitterest, and John's blood was all in a fever, the Governor wrote him:—

"You must leave no stone unturned," he said, in substance, "to win. You may have to sacrifice some scruples: but better do that than fail. It is vital to our future—yours and mine—that we lose no prestige. You can sit where I now do in five years, if you gain this victory."

Pride and ambition triumphed over everything else. For a time, in fact, he forgot all save that he must win. He went up and down the district making his speeches, seeing his friends, manipulating his enemies. His notes to Geraldine were the briefest; her letters to him he scarcely read. His whole being was narrowed down to the talk, the thought, the acts of political life.

Do you wonder that finally he transgressed every pledge of total abstinence, every promise to himself, to the woman he loved, to us all? I do not wonder. I only wonder that he held out so long against temptation such as few men ever have withstood. And when he fell I had no feelings of blame for him in my heart — only pity, even to tears, for one in whose native nobleness I had great faith, and a hatred deeper than ever for the curse of rum in politics, which had once more wrought his undoing.

When it was over, “being come to himself,” like the prodigal, he wrote Miss Faythe a letter that almost broke her heart. She had been in a constant struggle of mind concerning him, for days, even weeks, and now fear found its hard fulfillment.

O my darling! my success, that I wanted you to be so proud of, is but another failure. I am elected; you know that; but you do not know (I hope you do not, because I want to be first to tell you) that to win success I forfeited my word to you, and all my claim to your love and esteem, all my own self-respect. Some demon of sin led me on, I think. I could not help myself. I was so strong all those months before, and then suddenly so weak. O Geraldine! can you ever receive me back again to your love and confidence? I could almost curse God and die, darling!

The prize I have gained is nothing to me, now that I fear it has cost me more than I can ever regain. Has your heart lost its last excuse for my weakness and untruth? I am on my

knees at your feet, and I plead more humbly than ever a prodigal pleaded before. On my knees at your feet, and yet further off from love and purity than ever prodigal wandered till now. But I would return, darling ; I *must* return. There is never any more peace for me, away from your forgiving heart. I have nothing but the husks of remorse to feed upon, until you bid me "Come." Say the welcome word soon, ere I starve !

It was a full week later, before any reply reached him, and he in an agony of doubt and remorse almost every hour meanwhile. When it came it was very brief. It only said —

"Come !"

CHAPTER XLV.

A HUNGERING.

WHEN Bremm reached Baylan, having hurried thither as fast as steam could take him, he went at once to the home of Miss Faythe. He found her reclining upon a couch, looking more worn and ill than he had ever seen her before.

"You have been sick?" he said interrogatively, after the first greeting was over.

"Yes, a little," and she spoke with a manifest weariness that touched him. "I have not seemed to be very strong, of late."

"And I have helped your illness on," he said deprecatingly. "I shall never forgive myself; can you ever forgive me?"

"You were not to blame, John. I could not help feeling anxious for you, of course; and as I said, I have n't seemed strong."

"Was it my letter?" he asked, somewhat vaguely.

"That made me really ill?" She hesitated a moment, and closed her eyes wearily. "Yes," she said, when she spoke again. "I was so weak, you know, and — well, I had not expected it."

There was no hint of an accusing spirit in any word, in any tone.

"You thought I had more strength," he suggested, with something of bitterness.

"No; not just that alone. But I thought God would keep you. It seemed as if He must, I prayed so."

"Had you been so very anxious about me?" he asked, with an effort to remain calm.

"Yes; I could not help it. But still I thought God was hearing me, some way. I wanted it, so, I suppose," she added, as simply as might any child.

He buried his face in his hands, and his strong frame shook with the feeling that possessed him.

"The circumstances were very peculiar," speaking brokenly, now. "I shall never be placed so again. You cannot realize how I was pressed on. A man can't always do as he knows he should, in political life."

"Then don't you think he might better keep out of it?"

"Some men must be in it. But I have wished a hundred times that I had not entered this campaign. They fought me like fiends. They made charges against me that would disgrace a highwayman of the meanest type; they spent money like water; and I had to resort to almost everything to beat them."

"Perhaps God permitted it all as a test," she said, falteringly. "We have to be tested in so many ways. God tries our strength and our faith so often," the words coming weariedly again, as if she were but syllabling an experience.

"Are we to blame, then, if God tempts us so severely that we fall?" he asked, bitterly.

"God never tempts us. The Evil One is the tempter, and God permits him to have power in our hearts, if *we* permit him."

"But God knows when we are being tempted beyond our strength," he persisted. "Why does He not help us?"

"He does, if we ask Him. I am afraid you do not ask Him, John."

He made no reply, and she spoke again.

"It is just to show us how weak we are, that God sometimes lets us be tempted very peculiarly. I noticed what you said in your letter: 'I was so strong all those months before, and then suddenly so weak.' You were strong simply in your own strength; it was not God helping you; you were not relying on God, at all. That was why I feared so much for you."

"But I had your prayers; why could they not keep me?"

He was seeking excuses for himself, now, and was anxious to shift responsibility.

"My prayers never can keep you," and her voice was very sad. "They may help you, perhaps; but they cannot hold you, as God can hold you, as you need to be held, as I need to be held."

"But you are never tempted. You don't know, Geraldine, what temptation is. You can't."

"My temptation may be different from yours, but I *am* tempted every day. Every one is, I suppose."

"And yet you never doubt?"

"Yes, sometimes; when I have fought until I am faint and weak, and I forget to lean on God."

"But what battles can you have?" and he looked at her wonderingly. She smiled, a tired kind of smile, and waited a full minute before she answered.

"I have had one battle since your letter came," she said.

He was about to speak, but she interrupted.

"Wait, and I'll tell you. My love has seemed stronger than ever for you, for a long while. I have wanted you as I never wanted you before. My whole life has been

just a hungering after you. Sometimes I feared you were coming between me and God, but I kept praying that He would only let you be to me what was right. And somehow it seemed right to love you as I was loving you, and I felt glad that it did, for it was an evidence to me that it would be right for me to marry you when you wished. When the letter came I feared I had been all wrong, and yet I could not bear to think so, and I wanted to put every doubt and questioning one side, and be yours, spite of my fears."

He would have spoken again, but she stopped him.

"No, let me tell you. I never had such a battle with myself. I was in the dark all the while; I could n't see any light. I tried to pray, but every word of prayer was just a plea for God to let me do as I wanted to do. There was one night that I thought I should die, John, with the pain of it."

She wiped the gathering tears from her eyes, and sighed wearily.

"By and by I began to see that my own will was causing it all," she continued. "I tried to say, 'Not my will, but thine, be done;' but I only said it with my lips. Finally, when I was so weak and ill that I could not resist longer, God pitied me. I just said to Him, 'My will is gone, Lord; do with me as Thou wilt!' and then it began to grow light."

A look that always puzzled John came over her face — a look of such resignation and peace as he never saw in the face of another.

"And you are satisfied that we ought not to be married now?" he inquired, after a little silence.

"Yes; it would not be right. I tried to make it seem so, but wrong things will be wrong, no matter how much we try to make them appear right."

He would have reasoned the matter with her, if she had not anticipated his arguments by her story of struggling. He knew now it would do no good, and could only cause her pain.

"But can you forgive me, darling?" he asked. "You will not put me from you altogether?"

"Why should I?" was her response. "I must love you!" and her beautiful eyes said more even than her words. "And as to forgiving, God forgives every transgression, even to the very end. I have no right to be more exacting than He is. You have sinned more against Him than against me."

John could not reply, at once. He was moved as he had seldom been moved before.

"Geraldine Faythe!" he exclaimed, when he found words, "you are an angel!"

She shook her head rather sadly.

"No, my friend; I am only a weak, faltering woman, and never weaker than now."

He noticed then how much more pale and worn she looked than when he came.

"I am wearing the life out of you," he said. "You ought not to forgive me," and he arose to leave. "I will go now, and come again when you are rested."

She answered his parting kiss so tenderly that his heart gave a great throb, half of pain, half of joy; and when he had reached the street it was throbbing still, but whether for pain or joy he could not have told.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE STRAIT OF LOVE.

MISS FAYTHE had been sorely taxed in mind, and was quite worn out physically, as a consequence. When John took his final leave of her, before going to Washington for the winter, she was still pale and feeble, and every look he gave into her face was a reproach to him. She did not complain much, but went about in a sad kind of weariness, contrasting painfully with her accustomed lively ways.

Perhaps the remembrance of how worn and weary Geraldine looked, and how sadly tender was her last farewell, did more to hold Bremm strong in his newly-formed resolution than anything else could have done. He never recalled her now as she used to be — fair-faced, with great luminous eyes which told every expression of the lips before they could possibly syllable a phrase, and with a girlish youthfulness that gave no hint of full five years of her life — without first seeing her as she stood before him that time he last kissed her good-by, her eyes almost overflowing with unshed tears, her cheeks paled to very whiteness, a longing appeal speechless in her face, but speaking thus more eloquently than through any words.

And all the hurrying winter through John stood nobly by his vow. How much it cost him, only God and himself knew. How many times he was tempted almost beyond further withstanding, only those can realize who

have been through all he had been through, all he was obliged to go through again. Temptation assailed him on every side ; it beset him in every guise. Is it an easy thing, think you, to walk correctly among men? Your ways run among those who believe as you believe, who practice as you practice. You are seldom met as he was met every day, well-nigh every hour. You rarely go where to drink is the correct thing ; where to refuse is thought foolishly puritanical and odd. You do not esteem it specially brave for one to decline the wine-cup daily. You may be right. Some men go up and down as temperately as a man can, and it may not be brave in them to do it. They have formed no liking for that which intoxicates. With John Bremm it was different ; how different some of my readers need not to be told. So I say he did bravely, and I say the truth.

When spring came, he wrote Miss Faythe another letter of rejoicing and cheer, telling how he was yet true to himself and to her, and how fully he was determined to merit her love and patience. Among other things he said : —

I am not so often tempted as I used to be, darling. You see I am becoming known as “anti-liquor,” in practice as well as theory, and very many temptations that assailed me a few months ago now pass me by.. Even if I were tempted continually, it would not move me. I see you always as I saw you last, with that grieved, sorrowing look which I shall never forget. How much pain I must have caused you, to bring such sadness into your face ! I know, my darling, and my heart aches to think of it. Sometimes it seems as if my heart must ache always.

I love you so ! All these years since first you let me say it, I have gone on loving you with a love stronger and deeper, until now I cannot tell even a tithe of it ! I could say the words over and over, “ I love you so ! I love you so ! ” until

they made of themselves a song, and would sing on in your ears every hour of every day, and yet they would not measure the breadth or the depth of my love. I could think of you — I do think of you — with such an intensity of affection that it should *compel* your love in return ; and does it not ? Is it not a sweet compulsion ? Would you free yourself from it ?

My Geraldine ! you compel me, day by day. Separate though we are, you live by my side constantly, and I would not go far from you, if I could. You can lead me where you will. For your sake I have fought against temptation, and shall go on fighting against it. I would suffer even death for you, darling. To win you, to make your love and life add grace and beauty to mine, I would sacrifice more than I can tell, more than I may ever hold or possess.

Miss Faythe read the words again and again. At first, with a thrill at her heart, for such words never grow old where they are honest, and go out to meet an honest response : then with a vague sort of questioning, as if underneath the full and hearty expression of love she saw trouble and pain.

As a result of this questioning, she fought another sharp battle with her reason, her desire, her will. Hour after hour she struggled, solitary, unhelped. Sometimes she wondered if God had forsaken her. Sometimes she thought it unspeakably hard that she must solve so many difficult problems, and queried if other people were given anything like them for solution. Often she threw herself down by her couch in an agony of doubt, and cried piteously for light.

By and by, her strength all spent, when she could only whisper “ Help me, Father ! ” so weakly that none but the pitying Father could hear, she sank to sleep. The conflict was over ; she would do her duty when day came again, with no faltering, no delay. And what form did her duty take ? This : —

BAYLAN, —, 1869.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have read your letter many times through. It is very sweet to me. It is like you, too, so frank and so earnest. I did not answer it yesterday, when it came, for I wanted a little time to think,—yes, and to pray. Now that I have thought and prayed a good deal, I feel that what I am going to say is right, and yet it hurts me to say it, because it will hurt you.

You know I have always wanted to do as it seemed to be God's will, in this matter of our engagement. It is very plain to me now that it is God's will that we break off the engagement, and be just friends. I have thought many times before that it might all end so, but it never was clear to me as it has been of late. I have wanted to delay speaking of it, and I assure you now I have spoken after great hesitation, and in great pain.

What pains me most is that I cannot make it plain to you as it is to me. I cannot even show you all the reasons why, as I would like to. I must just do what hurts me more deeply than it can hurt you, and leave you to find out my real motive as best you can.

This does not look frank, my dear friend, I know. I cannot help it. For once in our intercourse I must withhold such expression as my heart prompts; because it would harm you, although it might help me in your estimation. Sometime you may know everything. If the time never comes, we can be friends just the same, can't we? No, not just the same, either, of course. In severing our engagement I must take away from you the right to tell me of your love, or to ask any return. We are to be *friends*. Write to me as you used to write to Hope, and come to see me as you go to see her now—just friendly, you know.

And do not let this strange step of mine lead you away from good resolutions. Oh my dear friend! if you should fall under temptation again because of this, I should think it was *not* right for me to say what I have said; and to feel I had done wrong in so great a matter, and had been the means of pulling you down, would *kill* me! It is on this account, more than

any other, that I have hesitated and delayed. Do not, I pray you, let me feel that your blood is upon my head!

I have written incoherently, I am aware, and you may be as much puzzled as pained by this letter. But I could not bear the hurt of trying to say over again what I have here tried to say. Let me only add that you will grieve me almost as much by attempts to persuade me I am wrong, as you will by thinking me unfaithful or unjust. But whatever you do, or whatever you think, I shall always be your friend,

GERALDINE.

When she had written the letter, in a nervous haste, as if she were anxious to see the end, Miss Faythe read it through with whitening lips, sealed it slowly, sadly, as if now all cause for haste were past, and then knelt down once more to put up simply the brief petition of the night previous, "Help me, Father!" And after breathing it forth again and again, in a tone beseechingly pitiful, she gave way at last to a flood of tears, borne out upon which was only the one occasional cry, "O Father! help me! help me, or I die!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

NIGH TO THE END.

JOHN received Miss Faythe's letter at his desk in the House of Representatives, in the midst of an exciting discussion upon some point concerning Reconstruction. He had just made a speech that commanded general attention, and won him compliments from the ablest members present. He was thinking of Geraldine, even as the letter passed into his hand ; thinking how pleased she would be at his success, and feeling very glad that he had succeeded so well, for her sake.

The letter dazed him. He read it through, and through again, the second time slowly, as if studying every sentence, every word. No clew of the writer's reason for such a step came to him. If she had said to him, "I do not love you ; I never did ; it has been all a pretense," he could not have been more surprised, more shocked. She had shown such a depth of affection, such a fullness of patience, that he knew not what to think. At first he could hardly think at all. He was dazed, blinded, benumbed.

They were calling the vote, but he did not sense it. Not until his name had been repeatedly called, did he hear or heed it, and then he astonished every one by voting against the proposition he had argued for so eloquently.

"What upon earth do you mean, Bremm ?" asked one of his party friends sharply, coming up in front of him.

John looked at him, puzzled by the man's manner, and but half recalled to himself.

"Are you crazy, to vote in this way?"

Something in Bremm's face perplexed him still more.

"Don't you know what you've done?" he continued, a little less harshly. "We barely had a majority, with all our men here, and now you're recorded on the other side and at least three that we relied upon are out."

With a sickly sort of smile John answered, —

"Did n't I vote right, Ernley?"

"You voted No! plain enough," that gentleman responded, wondering still more what had come over Bremm. "Get up quick and change your record," he added. "The chair has n't declared the vote yet."

John did as requested, tendering no explanation of his act, and then abruptly left the House.

After a little, when he came fully to realize all the letter meant, he began to grow indignant. True, he did not deserve Geraldine's love, but he felt that he was entitled to her frankness. And the letter was not frank — she had said rightly. It was not like herself. Some one had told untrue things of him, and she had believed them. She *must* give her reasons for thus breaking off with him. He would not yield her up unless she did; perhaps he would not give her up then. Was he a fickle-minded boy thus to yield his rights?

These and a hundred other statements he made to himself; this and a score of similar questions he asked, in his own mind. But by and by he thought of her as she looked when they parted last, and all his indignation melted into a compassionate forgiving. He had caused her too much pain and anxiousness already; he would not grieve her any more. It should be as she wished. He would yield everything to her will. If she would be

happier to have him as her friend only, her friend he would be. But what should he do without her love?

Ah! this was the one question he could not meet. He had relied upon her love through suffering and peril, amid temptations and falls. In impurity it had held him to the pure. It had been to him more, indeed, than he knew. And now must he give it all up?

These were hard lines, surely. His lines had all along been hard, some of them. God was unkind to him. Why had he been thus sorely dealt with? He had not so grievously sinned. Thousands of men led worse lives than he had led, and were yet given good things of God. Now the one good gift he most coveted was taken away.

So he went on reasoning, until he reasoned himself into a bitter, captious mood, that bade fair to carry him far away from truth and well-doing. But for that one remark of Geraldine's, "To feel I had done wrong in so great a matter, and had been the means of pulling you down, would kill me!" he might have rushed headlong into great woe. This kept him. "She loves me yet!" he thought, his eye catching this expression again, after much doubting and questioning; "she would not care so much, else. Some time she will change her mind."

He did not stop to think, just then, what later he knew to be true, that had she never loved him at all she might have uttered the same expression; that so keen and deep was her sense of responsibility, she could not have felt herself the agent of another's downfall, however little that other might be to her, without being crushed under it.

A few hours later Bremm was walking slowly down Pennsylvania Avenue. He had left his hotel to get away from a throng of besieging politicians, whom he was in no humor to talk to. He must answer Geraldine's letter, and he wanted to put a little distance between himself

and the shock of it, first. The broad thoroughfare seemed quieting to him. The early spring air, redolent of new foliage and early flowers, soothed and blessed him. It was worth while just to live, in such an atmosphere. What if there were difficulties and defeats? he thought. There were compensations. What if there were vexations of spirit? Nature had her balms. Life was not all a vanity and a vexation; Burley had preached truth. But there was a great deal of vanity about it, that was certain. Had he not seen much? Was he not daily in the midst of it? He knew considerable that Burley had not thoroughly known. Life might be more than vanity with every one; but with a great mass of the people it was that only. They never got on to the something more. And how was it with himself? What had he done? Had he gone beyond the vanity?

He was so wrapt in his own thoughts again that he heard nothing of an outcry not far ahead of him, that arrested the attention of passers-by. A team of mettlesome horses was dashing furiously down the avenue, with no driver on the box. Two children, a boy and a girl, were in the open carriage, shrieking for terror. John heard their shrieks, and heeded, as the runaways came nearly opposite to him, and made a quick plunge for the near horse's head. Luckily he caught the reins at the very bits, and though in imminent danger from the maddened beasts, he hung on bravely, and succeeded in partially stopping them.

While the team were rearing and plunging wickedly about, threatening each moment to trample him under their feet, some one rushed from the sidewalk and, catching the children in his arms, took them out of danger. It was a timely act, for hardly was it done when the high-blooded animal John was clinging to reared straight into

the air, lifting his captor clear from his feet and flinging him cruelly upon the pavement. An instant later the team had dashed over him and were fleeing madly on down the street, leaving John trampled, bleeding, and stunned.

The man who had snatched the children from their peril sprang to him quickly.

"Are you badly hurt?" he asked, bending over him.

There was no answer. He turned the trampled form over, and in the bruised and dust-grimed features he recognized a friend. The groan he gave might have come from the injured man himself, it had such pain in it.

"Who is it, Silvers?" a voice asked from out the crowd that had gathered round.

"It's General Bremm," he answered, hoarsely. "Help me lift him up, men," as if commanding his soldiers.

And bleeding and still unconscious, John was borne away.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SMITTEN DOWN.

CONCUSSION of the brain, the doctors called it ; and they gave little hope of recovery. For days Bremm lay in a comatose state, hanging between life and death. His mother was sent for, and went to him, in company with the Governor. She had changed little. Nothing but the presence of distinguished persons kept her from accustomed fault-finding and complaint. She had not much to do, when she reached the bedside of her son. His many friends gave him every attention. Senator Lascelle, father of the two children Bremm had saved, was untiring in his efforts ; and his wife and sister kept almost constant watch by the injured man.

Miss Faythe looked daily for an answer to her letter, and when a whole week passed and no word came, she feared she knew not what. Somehow the paragraph which told of Bremm's hurt did not meet her eye ; she did not happen to see any one who had read it. So for days and days her uncertainty grew, until but for prayer she must have gone wild. It seemed, at times, as if she should go wild as it was. He had taken offense, she thought ; or the blow she had given him was too hard, and he had taken to drink again. She was his murderer, perhaps.

Thus her days went by until they numbered weeks, and every week was one long doubt, one unremitting pain.

John slowly fought his way back to consciousness and life. It was a full month, though, before he had any realizing sense of things, and could think of what had passed.

"Sivers," he said, just after his mind returned, "write Miss Faythe for me."

"What shall I say, John?" his old comrade asked, ignorant, of course, of their present relationship.

"Say how I have been, and that I will write her by and by."

And so General Sivers wrote, and his letter was the first news Geraldine received. Her answer rather puzzled him. It was not written out of the heart's fullness. She read his words with a great throb of joy; and then she answered, briefly, dispassionately, as might any friend. She was very sorry General Bremm had been thus unfortunate; she hoped for his speedy recovery; she should be glad to hear from him at his convenience. And that was all.

It was clear to Sivers that these two were not quite what they had been to each other. It seemed clear to John, when he read the little note, that Geraldine could not love him as once she did. He sighed heavily, as he thought of it, and a tear dropped down upon his cheek. Sivers looked at him questioningly.

"It's all over between us," Bremm said, answering the look. "I tried to deserve her, but I could n't. It's my fault, and my misfortune, both. It does n't matter what becomes of me, now. Those brutes might as well have made an end of it all at once."

"There, there, John," said Sivers, wishing to soothe him. "Let it go. Don't think about it. There are thousands of other women in the world."

"But there's only one Geraldine Faythe," he persisted.

"There is n't to-day, but to-morrow there will be. I'll show you a bevy of them, then," and Silvers laughed. "Off with the old love, and on with the new," he added. "It's the way of the world, Bremm. Women seldom die of love; men never do;" and to escape his friend's rebuke, and also to afford him no opportunity for answer, Silvers left the room.

They took Bremm home to Liscomb, as soon as he could bear the journey, pausing a day at Baylan, *en route*. Silvers accompanied them.

"I want you to take this to Miss Faythe," John said to him, soon after they reached the capital city, handing him a note. "I should like to call upon her. This will introduce you. Tell her my wish, and see what hers may be."

It was an errand General Silvers did not fancy, but he made no opposition. He had had a strong desire to meet the young lady, until of late. Even now he found it stirring within him again.

He said little, when he returned.

"She would be glad to see you," was his report. "I will get a carriage, and take you there at once, if you think it best to go."

"And why should n't I go?" John asked, half impatiently, for he was still nervous and weak.

"I have not said you should n't," and Silvers smiled.

"But you think I had better not."

"Well, I can't see as it will do you any good. If it is all over between you, why trouble yourself any further?"

"But I want to see her."

"So I suppose."

"And she wants to see me."

"So she says."

"Well?"

"It is n't well at all, Bremm. You claim to love this young lady. Have you thought that it might be for her happiness for you to keep away from her?"

"Then why does she ask me to come?"

Silvers shook his head doubtfully.

"She is a woman, Bremm," was his dubious reply.

"But she is my friend, she says."

"Love is not a good thing to build friendship on."

"She cannot love me now, or she would not have thrown me aside as she has done," speaking a trifle bitterly.

"I tell you, John Bremm," and Silvers spoke with unusual soberness, "she loves you as deeply as ever she did. I'd give my life, almost, to have such a woman love me in such wise. You told the truth when you said there was only one Geraldine Faythe."

"Then why should I give her up without an effort?" and John roused himself as if further talk were useless.

"You should n't, Bremm. But take my advice. Let all your effort be toward a sober life. It will do you no good to try any other course with her. She will do what she thinks is right, or there's no truth in her face."

"Yes, I know," a bit of dejection creeping into his voice.

And without further remark the two entered a carriage and drove off.

Arrived at Miss Faythe's, Silvers helped John in, and then took leave, promising to call for him in an hour, which he did.

John was not inclined to talk much, as they drove back to the hotel. Once again in their room, though, he began, as it were, to think aloud.

"I can't understand it at all," he said. "I believe she

does love me as well as ever, but why does she put me away so? and why does she refuse to explain?"

"Did you seek an explanation?"

"To be sure I did. But she would not give it. I tried entreaty and reproach; and neither served me. I have always believed her the very soul of truth and frankness, and now it is a riddle I cannot solve."

"Better not try solving it, Bremm. If Miss Faythe really loves you yet, and I think she does, it will all come out right some time. Your chief business now is to get well and strong. Love requires good digestion, fair nerves, and a healthy liver, to thrive properly. These fellows who shoot themselves, because a woman throws them over, are more troubled with their livers than their hearts. It is dyspepsia that kills them, and not love."

"Silvers," said John, very solemnly, "did you ever really love a woman?"

"Bless you, old boy! of course. A dozen of them, first and last. Why not ask me if I ever had the measles? They are both catching, and—both curable," and Silvers laughed so heartily that his friend found the laughter likewise infectious, and joined in, despite previous soberness.

"That's right," Silvers declared. "That's the kind of tonic for you. A dozen such laughs a day will put you into good loving condition. Be sure you take them."

But Bremm needed more than laughter, it seemed, for as the days crept on he did not gain much in strength. He rode up and down the pretty village of his early home; he chatted pleasantly with his friends; he grew better, somewhat, yet only slowly. The doctors said he must not go to Ossoli, for the very presence, even, of his work, would tax him. He could not think of resuming his seat in Congress. Wearisome as it was, he must sim-

ply stay there in Liscomb, and bear as patiently as he might with his mother's chronic troubles, his own physical inability, his own unsatisfied state of mind.

The doctors prescribed stimulants, and said he must take them regularly, to build him up. Two months ago he would have questioned if to take such prescription, after all his fight against temptation, were judicious and best. Now he was weak and nervous, and not a little discouraged. It was an easy thing to yield. Presently his medicine became his beverage. He grew fleshy and stout—the medicine agreed with him. But he grew bleary-eyed and over-plethoric, and when at length he could go to Ossoli, to enter again upon journalistic duty, they who knew him best and loved him most were grieved and pained at the great change in his appearance. It was well for Geraldine Faythe that she saw nothing of him in those wretched months that followed.

If only I could leave that summer out of his life! His excesses were common talk. Good men mourned over them. His own party friends remonstrated with him, and sought earnestly to stay his hand. He either laughed at their warnings, or wept in the bitterness of his remorse, and then went straight on in the habit of indulgence. He was largely unfitted for professional work; it seemed a question, indeed, if he would be fit to enter Congress again.

Finally he was smitten down. The frenzy of drink possessed him. How the fiends mocked! how they fastened on him, and would not let him go! If anything in the past had been sad, this was sadder than all the past had been. I cannot picture it. I can only turn aside with a shudder and a sigh. So young, and so fair, and so fallen! And oh the curse of it!

Let us look away from the shadow, to the sunlight that shone beyond.

Burley, going up to Ossoli for a day only, found Bremm in a state which he could compare to nothing but hell begun here. He sent a dispatch to Hope. "John is dangerously ill; I shall stay," it said; and then he assumed entire charge of his friend. He could control him as none other might. But every day was almost an agony of torment. If ever man prayed, Burley did, every hour, well-nigh with every breath.

When the devils went out of the man they had so sorely beset, Burley was almost as weak as he. But there was work for both, yet. One must lead the other back to manhood once more; and a weary task it was. The other must fight his way upward over thorns that pricked him to the quick. "Not yet have ye resisted unto blood, fighting against sin," Burley said to him. "You must do it now, or die."

"It is no use; I shall die anyhow," and he wept until Burley wept with him.

But Burley was strong of spirit, if weak in the flesh. He held him up.

"I am striving for a soul, Hope," he wrote his wife. "Pray for us."

To Miss Faythe he wrote, "Our friend Bremm is in deep waters, struggling for life. If you can call to him a cheering word, God may bless it."

And she did call to him, so nobly, so tenderly, that her cry would have risen above any tumult of storm. She must have written that letter on her knees, Burley thought. It said nothing of love, as lovers know it. As a large-hearted elder sister she appealed to him, forgetful, as it seemed, that he had ever been aught to her in the deepest sense, only remembering what he might be to himself and his fellows, what he was to God.

"'He that loseth his life for my sake,' she said, 'shall

find it.' Christ is speaking the words now, as He spake them so long ago. Are you losing your life? Let the loss be for his sake, and you shall find far more than you can hope or I can tell. His is a sweet promise to such as have found their life in Him: 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end.' We need no other presence, no other comfort, no other strength. All in our past that is dead, but might live again to our profit, He will surely make alive for us, in His own good time. 'I am the resurrection and the life,' He has declared. Apart from Him there is only death. With Him all true things live on forever, and what a sweet association it must be."

Burley found nearly as much help in the letter as did John. It was so strong in conscious faith. It was so simple and so direct.

Hope also wrote. "Bring John here, as soon as he can come," was her closing suggestion.

And so presently he was an inmate of their little home, with Hope's sisterly ministry to supplement the work of nature, the devoted watchfulness of Burley, the prayer of three strong, prayerful souls, and the strivings of the Spirit of God.

This is not a record of religious experience, and therefore I shall not tell how from the darkness of sin and doubt John struggled slowly up to the light of loving trust in Christ. It would have been a hard struggle at best. It was made harder by the fact that he needs must fight all the while against an appetite he could not appease, as well as against doubt, and shame, and his own will. A hard struggle, indeed. If you have it yet to go through, God pity you! A hard struggle, but he won at last, won more than a mere victory, for he won peace.

"I have found my life," he wrote to Miss Faythe, then.

"I have found my life, and have come into great joy. In prison long, I am finally free. The way of escape was hid in Jesus Christ, and I would not try to find it. I see my mistake now ; and in beginning again am striving to begin right. Of all my dead past there is but one thing I would see live once more, and that I leave with God."

When John Bremm went out again among men, in his accustomed walks, he was still weak in body, but growing strong of soul. He had entered upon his inheritance — true manhood in Christ. Not a stalwart manhood, at first, but to be that sometime, if God willed. How changed he was, physically, all saw ; how changed he was in his inner being, very many felt.

He did his work a while, but in such weakness and weariness that his associates advised an entire letting it alone, a leisurely tour somewhere, until he must go to Washington. They planned a month's journeying, he and Burley, and would have started in two days more. Then a hemorrhage prostrated him, and the plan was changed. Liscomb air would deal as kindly with him as any other, the physicians said.

"We will all go to Liscomb," Burley decided for him. "Hope wants a good long visit home, and I want to be near you."

But even in Liscomb John did not build up his strength. The seeds of pulmonary disease had been sown while in camp, medical advisers reasoned ; these had developed silently amid the excitement and dissipation of more recent years ; it was one of those rapid, insidious cases that almost baffled remedy at the first manifestation. Another attack of bleeding followed, soon after their arrival in Liscomb, and he grew rapidly worse. In a week, it seemed certain that he would never be any better. Burley felt that he must speak.

"Have you thought that you may never get well John?" he asked.

"Yes, I have thought so for some days."

"There is very little hope left for you, the doctor says, John."

"But he's wrong there," and he spoke earnestly; "wrong there, 'Bert. There's the Great Hope left—nobody can take that away from me."

"Thank God for that, John! You are satisfied, then, are you, that it will be all right?"

"Oh yes!" and the confidence in his voice told more than the syllables could.

"Is there anything I can do for you, John?" with a little quaver in the question.

The sick man's look wandered away out of the window near, across the valley, and far off to the bending sky beyond.

"I should like to see Geraldine once more," he whispered. "It seems as if I could n't go, without."

A tear rolled down his cheek, and dropped upon his hand.

"I will go after her, John."

"Do you think she will come?" his face lighting into half a smile.

"She is a true woman, John. She will do what she believes to be right."

"And it would be right for her to come?"

"I think it would, for she is your friend. To-morrow I will go and see."

CHAPTER XLIX.

AT THE LAST.

Two days later, at mid-afternoon, John sat bolstered up in an easy-chair, looking out into the late October sunshine. His mother had been kept awake with him more than usual, the night before, and had gone to sleep now, so that he was alone. The flush of autumnal glory was departing; here and there a tree flamed out as brilliantly as ever, but the general glow had faded into sombreness. The sick man's face reflected somewhat the sober tints outside.

A rustle at the door, and Hope came in.

"Are you alone, John?"

"Is it you, Hope?" he asked, faintly, in return. "Yes. I was thinking how it says, 'We all do fade as the leaf.' In one sense it is n't true. Those leaves yonder have done their work; but what have I done?"

"Your work, too, John, I suppose; God knows best about these things."

"But they have lived out the measure of their life; I am only on the threshold of mine, it seems to me."

"So it would seem if you were many years older, perhaps. This life is only the threshold, whether we are young or aged; but from it we can step right into one of the many mansions. Think of it, John!"

"Yes; I have thought — 'the many mansions'! I shall not be homeless any more," his tone dropping so low the words were scarcely audible.

After a moment's silence Hope spoke again.

"Albert has come, John."

"Why, how could he get here so soon? The stage does not come until night."

"No ; but he drove over, so as to save time."

"Did he come alone?"

"No, John. Miss Faythe is with him. They are in the other room now."

He turned his head away, and said no word.

"Can you bear it now, John?"

"Yes ; let her come in."

A moment later, and Hope had gone, and in her place, pale and trembling almost as him she came to see, stood Geraldine Faythe.

She bent over him and pressed her lips to his. There were moments of silence, before either spoke.

"I could not bear to go away forever without kissing you good-by," he said. "And I wanted to tell you I am not afraid to go."

Her only answer was a great sob of grief.

"You love me yet, darling, or you would not have come."

"I would have come even as your friend ; I *must* come, after all that has passed between us. If you will let me, I will stay."

He smiled amid his tears.

"Yes ; stay with Hope," he answered, "and come in as often as you may."

"But why can I not stay with you?" she asked appealingly. "You will not put me from you now, John? Give me the right to stay," and her face burned to crimson at the request.

He kissed her tenderly, a great struggle in his breast.

"At the very last, Geraldine, would you be my wife?"

"It is my right," she said, steadily.

"But why did you put me from you?" and the pained wonder in his face stabbed her to the heart.

"I did not want to, John. I never loved you more than when I did just that."

"I cannot understand" —

"Don't talk now, dear, and I'll tell you. I wanted you to do right just for the right's sake, and not for mine. You were practicing temperate habits because I wished it. You were not building on motives that would last, and I feared for what would come of it all. I was afraid if you let the drink alone in the hope of winning me, you might take to it again when you had succeeded. It was in the belief that you would find a higher motive that I took away the lower one. I may have been wrong, darling; but I thought I was doing right."

She paused, and wiped the gathering tears from her eyes.

"I never doubted your love, John, and I never doubted that God would shape it all, some way. If we really trust to Him we cannot go far astray."

"But does it seem right to you that my life should end so soon, just when I am beginning to live?"

"No; it does not *seem* right, but I know God cannot make mistakes. He would not be God, if He did. I am certain of that; and it does not matter so much how things *seem* to us, as how they *are* to Him.

"You must not talk any longer, darling," she resumed. "Only say I shall stay; that I may have the right."

"I want to, Geraldine; I want to say it. But it does not seem the best thing for you now. I would not leave you widowed. If you could stay near until" — he paused, unable, for an instant, to go on.

Burley and Hope came in then. Geraldine went straight to them.

"Mr. Burley," she said, without manifest shrinking, "do you know of any good reason why I should not become John's wife?"

"None at all, Miss Faythe, if you choose to take that responsibility."

"Mrs. Burley, do *you*?"

For answer, Hope threw her arms around the questioner, and kissed her as a sister might have done.

"Shall it be this afternoon, John?" Burley asked.

"Let it be as she says," was the tremulous answer.

"Rest for an hour, then," said Burley, "and I will arrange everything meantime. You go and notify Mrs. Bremm, Hope, and then take Miss Faythe home with you till I come."

It was a very touching little tableau they made in that same room, toward the sunset. John sat there still, bolstered up with pillows, and a smile of real heart-gladdness lighting up his wan face. Miss Faythe stood beside him, decked out in no bridal array, but more beautiful in John's sight than ever she had been before. On either side were Burley and Hope, and in front waited the clergyman so hastily summoned. Mrs. Bremm stood near, fairly dumb from surprise, and perhaps fortunately so; while as other witnesses there were present only Mr. and Mrs. Hensell.

John was the only one who smiled, through it all, and even his smile faded into a strange, indefinable look of awe as the minister uttered those final sober words, —

"And what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Their kisses for the bride were as sober as his words, after the "Amen" had been said. Mrs. Bremm found utterance when she gave hers. There was not much of it for one so voluble.

"I shall love you," she declared, a trifle hysterically, "because you love my boy," and then she walked hastily out.

When it was over, and the others had gone, Burley and Hope went away, leaving the twain alone together. The slant sunset rays streamed into the room, and fell across their faces, as they sat side by side, his head resting upon her breast.

"It is the end of a day," he whispered. "Oh, darling! if it were only the morning!"

"The morning will come soon, dear heart."

"But there is a night between."

"True, darling. Yet there are always stars. 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.'"

"And 'thy rod and thy staff they comfort me!'"

"There is comfort, even in his rod, Geraldine. I could not have believed it, once."

And so they found comfort for each other.

John rallied a little, in a day or two, and they almost began to hope. But he sank again, shortly after, and it was clear that the end was nigh. A week from the wedding, John called Burley to him.

"You will preach the funeral sermon, 'Bert?' " he said.

"Ask anything but that," his friend replied, chokingly.

"But you must," speaking now with an effort. "Let it be in the church, for I want all who may to hear. Tell how I failed — how I failed — and — why."

The words came hesitatingly, as if he could not quite shape them as he wished.

"There is a verse about — overcoming. I can't tell — find that."

Burley turned to Revelation, and in one of the final chapters he read, —

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things ; and I will be his God and he shall be my son.”

“That is it,” and he spoke with more energy. “Use that for your text, and tell them how they may overcome. Make my life an example to others who are living as I have lived, and it may be worth while after all.”

Burley could not speak.

“Promise me, 'Bert,” John appealed, and the promise was given.

He died at sunset, reclining in his easy-chair, his face turned toward the west, and those who loved him gathered round. General Silvers and Governor Bremm had come, and stood by, tearful even as the rest. They did not think him going, just then. He had lain silent some minutes with closed eyes. Suddenly he roused a little, opened his eyes, and smiled. A golden ray of sunlight shone across his face. His lips moved as if he would speak. Geraldine bent low, that she might surely hear.

“It is the morning, darling,” he said, clear and strong. “He that overcometh — shall inherit — all things.”

They could scarcely catch the final words. His eyes shut tremulously ; a faint smile hovered below them ; he was gone. He had entered upon his everlasting inheritance.

“‘And there shall be no night there,’” said Geraldine, as if speaking to herself and to him.

“‘Neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain,’” Burley added ; “‘for the former things are passed away.’”

CHAPTER L.

“HE THAT OVERCOMETH.”

So large a funeral had never been seen in Liscomb. The regiment of militia which had its head-quarters there, turned out with full ranks, in honor of the dead. The Governor's Guards came on from Baylan, as chief military escort, and the Governor's entire staff came with them. Ossoli sent a large delegation from its civic and military associations. All Liscomb had heard how there had been a death-bed marriage, and nearly every man, woman, and child must witness the final scene. The largest church was packed with people, in all its available space, long before the procession arrived, and hundreds crowded about the entrance, who could not make their way in. It was with the greatest difficulty that those in charge could keep clear the space reserved for the mourners and the troops.

There were little children outside, who will never forget how solemnly sounded the dirge of the Governor's Guards Band, as that procession filed slowly along the street. Even to those who had heard such a dirge often, it seemed more than commonly solemn. And when the slow, measured tread of the soldiers sounded through the church, and they placed the coffin down in front of the pulpit, the band all the while playing softly, sadly, without, one great sob shook the whole concourse, and strong men wept like the women at their side.

Governor Bremm escorted his sister-in-law, and Geraldine leaned upon the arm of General Silvers. Burley left Hope at the door, with her parents, and entered the pulpit with the clergyman who had served at the marriage, and who regularly officiated there. It was a trying position for him. As much as any other there, save Geraldine, was he smitten in heart. He had seldom spoken to a Liscomb audience — never from the church desk. He hardly sensed what was passing until the opening exercises had been gone through with, and he stood up before that vast gathering to fulfill the promise he had made. I cannot give the sermon as he gave it, although a complete report lies before me as I write. It must lack something of the sober tremulousness of his tone, and all the solemnity which waited upon the words. It was a full minute after he rose, before he could utter a syllable. Then he spoke so low that but for the perfect stillness resting upon all, he could not have been heard.

I cannot feel that my place is in the pulpit to-day. I ought of right to sit there, among those who mourn, that I might weep with them for a dear friend dead. He who lies in the coffin here was as near to me, almost, as to any of his kin. We were boys together, we had our boyish sympathies, our boyish pursuits. We grew to manhood in company, and since manhood began we have been friends the same. All that he was, I knew; all that he hoped to become I knew, also. Wherein he failed I saw; and of his successes none of us are ignorant. And because of my intimate relations to him I stand up now, in the midst of so many who knew him and loved him, to speak of his life as he wished me to speak of it, honestly, plainly, as in the hearing of Him who is the giver of all life.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things," was his own chosen Scripture for this occasion. He died with the words on his lips. "Tell them how I failed," he said to me, on that sad day when he went away from us forever. "Make my life an

example to others who are living as I have lived," was his last injunction, "and then it may be worth while."

And did he fail, friends? What will the world say? What will these youths say, who remember him as a printer boy among you, when they were studying their primers? What will they say who seek what he won—fame in the uniform of a soldier; power in the halls of state; influence through the public press? Was it failure, to win all this? They will tell me nay—the boys who hear my question; the grown-up men who play at soldiering; the politicians who study statesmanship, and aspire to place. He was poor and unlearned; he pushed his way up to plenty and knowledge. He did brave things for his country; he wrought nobly for himself. He went from your midst unknown, unhonored; he came back a hero, who had earned recognition and honor; he is dead, and lo! what a multitude of mourners! And can this be failure?

If he had not put the word into my mouth, I should scarcely dare use it as I do. "Tell them how I failed," he said. He trusted that I knew. Will you also take my knowledge upon trust, until I make it plain?

"He that overcometh." These were his test words, if I caught the meaning of his Scripture choice. The phrase implies a somewhat to overcome. He was a soldier, and he knew that overcoming means victory; that both imply an enemy to fight. And what had he to fight? More than poverty, friends; more than ignorance, and injustice, and a hard fate. One may overcome each of these, and never find the inheritance our text hints of. His worst foe was not from without, but from within. When it stood without it was not a foe, as he saw it, as so many of us see it. It was a pleasant friend. It smiled upon him. It beguiled him. When it entered within, it was his master; it enchained his will, and dethroned his better sense, and ate out the finer threads of his moral nature. Without, it was congenial company, the courtesies of good society, occasional indulgence; within, it was habit, appetite, the very hunger of thirst, yieldings innumerable. Without, it was honorable political association, and the

means by which preferment is secured ; within, it was a tending down, a blunting of the moral sense, a settling away from the sure ground of sobriety on which alone a man can hold what he gets.

Our friend overcame much, but not until very near the end did he overcome himself. How could he ? For years he was in prison, and he knew it not. His prison bars were the smooth surroundings of political place, the frequent yieldings to practices doubtful, the not rare employment of agencies which should put respectability to the blush. Can a man touch pitch and not be defiled ? Can a man sit safely in his seat of honor who has floated there upon a tide of intoxicating drinks ? Can a man's manhood hold always its noble crown, when he, for office, barter the manhood of his fellows, and reck not the terrible cost ? I say he was in prison, — this our dear friend, so eloquent in his silence, — and he knew it not. He learned the way of escape at last, it is true, but too late. He was free once, free to make of his manhood a thing grand and glorious, as the young Nazarene made his, ages ago ; free to work out a success nobler than any he did work out ; free to overcome, in the sense the Scripture means it, and to inherit all things of his Father in Heaven. Behind his prison bars he came down to death's door oftener than you know, and I shudder to think of the end, had he entered through.

The separate successes he won were not failures, measured as separate facts. But group them all together and they made one great, sad failure, because they did not build him up into a worthier, stronger manhood, as they might have done. Yes, I recognize the truth that success before the world may beautify and broaden a life. All real glory of living is not shut away in a corner. The peasant may shine it out upon his household ; and with it a king may illumine his kingdom. But outward success may be inward failure, after all ; it commonly is. Suppose our friend had lived always the sober, abstemious life he might have lived, and had stood up unswervingly for correct practices. He might have done this, and won all he won, — aye, and how much more !

And what if he had won all he sought? Will any one say he would be poorer now? "He that overcometh shall inherit." We do not earn all we have. More comes to us than we think. We have nothing that is not God's — nothing worthful, and to be desired. Some things come to us here from our Father's open hand; who shall tell us of the "all things" we are to be possessed of by and by, if only we overcome? An endless day, a perfect peace, an illimitable joy! The few things we have here find an end; the peace we purchase is never a perfect peace; the joy comes to grief. But the "all things" of our inheritance will know no ending. Oh! if our friend could but syllable some words to us, from amid the new possession he has entered on! Even the words there must be sweeter than our words, for they never breathe of pain, or failure, or disappointment. And the songs — hark! I look down in my dead friend's face here, and I see his smile, as I shall always see it, the same smile that was his good-by. "It is the morning," he said, and I think he heard the morning's music as he spoke, so glad he looked. Gaze into his face, presently, and mayhap you shall fancy him listening to that grand matin song the angels ever sing above each Christian's grave: "I am the resurrection and the life!"

I have told you wherein I think our friend failed, and why. But if his life was in the best sense a failure, his death was in the same sense a success. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" — so, I have often thought, does He pity us all. He lets us begin over again so many times! If we build wrong, we may rebuild, and in his infinite pity there is ever room. If we work poorly, we may try once more, and be blessed. "It is the morning," our friend declared, as he went out of this life on earth. It is morning with many here to-day, and the work you have begun is poor and crude. God sees and pities, and will let you try again, if you only will. "Work while the day lasts; for the night cometh in which no man can work." Yes, work, and fight, and win. Our promise is sure: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things!" The infinite riches are certain to such as are heirs of God.

I have not given the whole sermon, but enough to show you how brave, and touching, and true it was.

Hundreds of that awed multitude followed the remains as they were borne away for burial. The solemn dirge seemed yet more solemn since the solemn service. At the grave there was little said or done.

" 'And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.' "

" 'I am the resurrection and the life.' "

" 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' "

" 'Thus saith the Scripture to us,' " were the preacher's words, as they lowered the coffin down. " Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust, until it is the resurrection morning for us all ! " "

The soldiers fired a salute, which echoed and reëchoed along the hushed valley ; and John Bremm had gone away forever.

I left Baylan soon after this, and did not go back, except to pass through, for two years. Then one evening we had a little reunion at the Latimers', such of our old coterie as could come together. She that had been Geraldine Faythe was there. Her ways had not changed much. She seemed a little more subdued in manner than formerly, and I caught a look of longing in her face, when we spoke of the old times.

" I spent most of a year at Liscomb, after Mr. Bremm's death," she said, in answer to a question of mine. " His mother needed me. "

" She took his loss very hard, I suppose ? " "

" Yes ; for a while she complained a great deal. I could not bear to leave her so. Then she began to run down, and I stayed till she died. "

" It must have been a great trial for you. "

"Mrs. Bremm changed considerably, toward the last," she answered. "She had a good heart, and she came to see many things in a better light. Besides, I had this for my comfort: 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things,'" and her eyes mellowed to a deeper tenderness at the words.

Next day General Silvers chanced to ride with me on the train.

"I saw John Bremm's Geraldine last night," said I.

"Ah?" and he smiled. "I have seen her often since Bremm's death. She is a rare woman."

"It seems a pity that she cannot make some man's life happy, now that John is gone."

"Yes," and a queer expression accompanied his assent. "It *is* a pity. Perhaps she will, by and by. Bremm was right, when he used to say there was only one Geraldine Faythe."

I learned the other day that Silvers is unmarried yet. It may be an odd fancy of mine, but I cannot help thinking he is waiting and hoping to win her.

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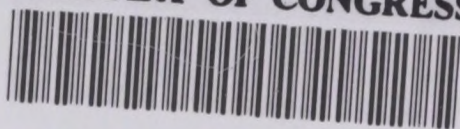
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